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THREE YEARS IN SHETLAND

BY

REV. JOHN RUSSELL, M.A.

Minister of Leslie, Aberdeenshire

ALEXANDER GARDNER

PAISLEY; AND 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

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LIFE IN SHETLAND.

CHAPTER I.

Number of writers about Shetland—Author's knowledge of country—Competition for Parishes lessened—reasons for going to Shetland.

UNTIL a comparatively recent period there were very few strangers who, for the sake of health or recreation, found their way to Shetland. The only visitors were those who went thither for the purposes of trade, or who were interested in the fishings, on which the general prosperity of the inhabitants so much depended. All this, however, has been changed. In summer a constant stream of tourists, conveyed by commodious and well-appointed steamers, is landed at Lerwick and Scalloway, who, roaming over the islands, survey with admiration the scenery, and feel interest in observing the manners and customs of the people, so different in many respects from those to which they have been accustomed.

We may judge of the surprise and wonder felt by visitors at the transition which they experience on leaving Leith or Aberdeen, by the number of articles and notices which have appeared from time to time of late years. A

hurried run through the country, and such knowledge as may have been picked up at second hand, is often deemed enough to rush into print. Ministers on their holidays, students on botanical or geological excursions, men in business, inspectors of schools, have been most distinguished for recent, and in some cases most brilliant and successful attempts to communicate to others the delightful impressions made on them, and the information they have collected. This is not to be wondered at. We are assured on high authority that a stay of eight days in India is sufficient to qualify for writing a book on it.

It may form some apology for my appearing among those who have written on the subject, that my residence in Shetland extended to the period of three years, that at other times I have paid frequent visits to it, and that I have travelled through almost every part of it.

It is reasonable to suppose that at no period the cure of a parish in Shetland was so desirable as one on the mainland of Scotland. The isolation from society, the want of roads, the nature of the climate, the distance from centres of intelligence and refinement, had the effect of causing a residence in this country to be regarded by most people as a mild species of banishment. There were, indeed, parishes looked on with greater favour than others; and if a minister was settled in a parish early in life he gradually became passionately attached to his island home. He sought no change, but passed his life in contentment among his people in the peaceful and faithful discharge of the duties of his sacred office, attached to his parishioners, and they to him. At no period, however, has there been any lack of candidates for a vacant parish.

Before 1843 when as many as 700 students crowded the divinity halls in St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and when there was a large reserve of probationers to fall back upon in the case of a vacancy, no little influence was required to obtain a charge even in Shetland. The Earl of Zetland was sole patron of the twelve livings in the islands, and therefore until the abolition of patronage it was only those who were recommended to him who had any prospect of obtaining an appointment.

By the erection of *quoad sacra* parishes, by the establishment of churches in connection with the Free Church, the United Presbyterians, the Wesleyan Methodists, the Independents and the Scots Episcopal Church, the number of clergymen has been greatly increased. It is to be expected that as wealth increases the number of dissenting churches will also increase, for here as in other parts of the world there are persons given to change.

I may now speak of what led to my becoming a minister in Shetland. I had been several years licensed, and was almost in despair of becoming an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, when I was elected minister of the *quoad sacra* parish of Whalsay.

I was at the time a parish schoolmaster, and was, to tell the truth, heartily tired of teaching. This was not because I did not like the work, but because of the circumstances in which I was placed. I had a crowded school, and the accommodation being deficient, my health suffered in consequence. Before the passing of the Education Act there was a want of elasticity in the provisions afforded by law for the purposes of education. If a schoolroom was in decent repair, however much the attendance of

scholars might be increased, there was the utmost difficulty, if not impossibility, of moving heritors to enlarge the buildings. "Palaces were not to be built for dominies." Any one who in an afternoon has entered one of the old crowded parish school-rooms can readily understand how such an atmosphere was in the highest degree injurious to health, and how a teacher in such circumstances often sighed for a change of occupation. I have heard teachers say at the end of the summer holidays, when their health had been recruited and their appetite had returned, after enjoying the fresh air and scenery of the country, that it was with a shudder that they contemplated the idea of returning to their usual employment.

All this is happily changed, and whatever may be the additional burden of taxation imposed on the country in the shape of school rates, the passing of the Education Act has been a blessing of the highest magnitude and importance to teachers and taught.

In giving up my school I made a very considerable pecuniary sacrifice, my stipend as a minister not being much more than half my emoluments as a parish schoolmaster. One thing in particular I grudged giving up. This was my garden. To most schoolmasters in the country, a garden is a pleasant source of recreation. Keeping bees, rearing flowers, fruit, and vegetables during spare hours and moments of leisure are a pleasant exchange for the confined and exhausting labours of a class-room.

My garden was small but well adapted in regard to soil and climate for rearing flowers. In one corner I had an immense hydrangea which remained there all winter, and flowered to perfection every summer. The only

protection it got in winter was a little brushwood. I had also a Marechal Niel on the wall which grew to a great size and flowered remarkably well. I had plums and apricots, and even tried a peach. As to other things I need only say that I was a very successful competitor at local exhibitions, and was president of our parish horticultural society.

Parting with friends and old pupils is not very agreeable, but this had to be experienced, as going to Shetland to reside implied taking leave of an acquaintanceship formed during a residence of twenty years. However, I had made up my mind, and in due time set about removal. As I was living on the south side of the Moray Firth, and about sixty miles from Aberdeen, I hired a sailing vessel from Lerwick to convey my furniture, and went with my family by steamer.

CHAPTER II.

Going to Shetland—Landing Furniture—Extent and Population of Whalsay—My predecessor, Mr. Willans—Benefits of Endowment—Difficulties in Travelling—Prejudice against Roads—A short Ministry.

In due time the sloop made its appearance. I was afterwards told that the master had been unwilling to undertake the voyage. He had up to this time been employed in coasting about the islands, and though he had been at Davis Straits had never been so far south as the Moray Firth. However, his owners had prevailed on him to make the attempt, and as it was summer and the weather fine, he managed without much difficulty to make out Troup Head, and thence found his way to his destination. After a short stay in the metropolis of the islands we again embarked, this time on a small coasting steamer, called from her speed the Crab. We reached the Manse of Whalsay in safety. For some days we were most hospitably entertained at the house of the principal farmer in the place until our furniture could be landed and placed under cover. The sloop which carried our household goods was anchored in the narrow sound opposite the manse, near the rocks which bordered the shore. There was no pier, but the people who assisted were well accustomed to landing goods in such circumstances. The sea was smooth, and in a few hours the various articles of furniture were taken from the hold, placed in boats, and then handed ashore on the rocks, whence they were

carried up to the house by a steep path a distance of about a couple of hundred yards. It was fortunate that the weather was both calm and dry. I do not know how we would have fared if the sea had been rough or rain had been falling. As it was, thanks to the ingenuity of the carpenter whom we employed and the willing services of neighbours, we found no more difficulty in putting things in order than is usually experienced in removing from one house to another on the mainland.

The parish to which I had come consisted of the island of Whalsay and the group of islands called the Out-Skerries. Whalsay is on the east side of Shetland, and contains nearly 900 inhabitants. It is about five miles in length by two in breadth. Portions of it near the shore are good soil and are cultivated, but by far the greatest part is an uncultivated waste of bog and moor. The place names are all Norse: such words as Skaw, Berg, Houl, Gard, Brough, and especially Sæter, being found. This last word occurred in various combinations. We had Challister, Isbister, Hogsetter, Symbister, Marrister, Livister, Hamaster, and others.

My predecessor was the Rev. Angus Willans. He had been at first missionary on the Royal Bounty. By his untiring exertions a sufficient sum of money was raised both for the endowment of the charge and for the erection of a commodious manse. As sometimes happens, he did not live long to enjoy the fruit of his labours in a worldly point of view. He died a few years after the endowment was completed. By his pulpit ministrations, and the kindly interest which he took in the members of his flock, he had endeared himself in a high degree to his parishioners. They often lamented his untimely death with ex-

pressions which I had every reason to believe were heartfelt and sincere.

In many cases the people are poor, or in very humble circumstances. They are far from church. The roads are bad, or do not exist at all. Landlords are often non-resident. The presence of a clergyman, a man of education, has a beneficial influence in a community, apart from his preaching. He is one who can give them counsel and advice when it is needed. He is ready at all times to minister comfort and consolation to the sick and aged; and if he cannot, from his limited means, always relieve the wants of the poor, he is one to whom in a time of difficulty all look for help and guidance.

Formerly the parish minister in many cases had to preach in turn at two and even three churches. These were it may be six or eight miles apart. In the case of Whalsay the church and parish were separated from the mainland and from the rest of the parish of Nesting by a sound or channel, impassable in stormy weather. The minister preached at the different churches in his parish on successive Sabbaths. If by stress of weather he was prevented from discharging this duty on the appointed day, he waited until the day came round again, so that he made his appearance occasionally after an absence of six weeks. It is to the credit of parish ministers in that remote part of the world that they have faithfully discharged the duties of the Christian ministry under great difficulties. They have had, as an almost ordinary part of their work, to endure fatigue and exposure to wind and rain, which many would deem intolerable.

In travelling from one place to another, whether in going to church or returning, but especially in the work

of visitation, trackless moors have often to be crossed. It is true that in many highland parishes, and in pastoral districts in the south of Scotland, similar work has to be done, but there, where there are no roads, the peat mosses and hill pasture generally present a firm and even surface. In Shetland, however, the moors are in many places broken up, not unlike the lumpy appearance of the sea in one of the sounds in a storm. Travelling is therefore frequently a series of jumping over hollows, or climbing up one hillock and going down another.

Even when the surface is unbroken it is for the greatest part of the year of a soft and spongy texture, rendering walking to a distance extremely fatiguing. To the natives, who used to walk barefooted or wearing sandals of undressed cow-hide, called rivelins, the soft surface was more agreeable than a macadamised road. When at the time of the potato disease district roads were formed, one of the principal objections to them was that walking on them would wear out the rivelins. When roads were made some opposed to innovations, *laudatores acti temporis*, used to walk among the heather beside the road, scorning to make use of the new pathway, but they had to give in. In journeying by sea, there is the discomfort of being cooped up in a small boat with scarcely room to stretch one's limbs. And there is the risk that though the weather may be fine in the morning you may have to return home in a gale. To a landsman, little accustomed in youth to the sea, the sight of broken water in the currents and tideways, even in smooth weather, is apt to inspire a certain amount of fear, not to speak of other uncomfortable sensations, corporeal rather than mental. No doubt this wears off by degrees, but even habit does not

make boating agreeable to those who live a sedentary life, and frequent exposure to cold and wet is rather favourable to rheumatism than otherwise. Some ministers, indeed, seem to take a great delight in boating at all seasons, but this is by no means common. The late Dr. Hamilton of Bressay was one of the most fearless and skilful boatmen in the islands. One instance will give an idea of the feelings with which a beginner is apt to regard the fatigues and exposure incident to the ministry in Shetland.

A young man had come from the south to be assistant to the minister of Quarff and Burra. This is a united parish, having one church in Quarff beside the manse, and the other in the island of Burra.

A road leads from the manse of Quarff for about a mile to the noost where the minister's boat was kept. From this to the church of Burra the distance to be traversed by sea is about three miles. Part of this is quite land-locked. Service is held in the two churches on alternate Sabbaths. An afternoon service is in addition held in Quarff in summer when the minister can return home in time. The young man who had been engaged as assistant arrived on Saturday evening from Aberdeen by the steamer. He had been brought up in a large town, and having been comfortably reared, probably had never got his feet wet during his life. He was told the next morning that he had to go to preach at Burra. So he prepared to go. Before setting out, he after breakfast went out to the lawn in front of the manse to take a look at the weather. It was a lovely morning in July, but owing to a heavy dew the grass was wet as with a heavy shower of rain. On seeing this he immediately returned into the house and said to the minister, "I cannot go to

Burra to-day, the grass is all wet, I will get my feet wet and catch cold."

The old man, who had been long accustomed to island life and had gone so often to Burra in all sorts of weather, and had never thought of complaining, was so much astonished that at first he did not know what to say. However, at last he told him that it was chiefly to go to Burra that he was wanted, and that there he must go, otherwise he would be of no use to him.

On hearing this, the assistant went to Burra, preached and returned in the evening, all the while resolved that as it was his first visit to that place it would be his last. So on Monday morning he gathered all together, I am not sure indeed if he had unpacked his trunk, and went in to Lerwick, whence he returned to Aberdeen, sailing by the steamer in the evening. His ministry was thus the briefest known in Shetland, being comprised within the forty-eight hours during which the steamer lies at anchor in Bressay Sound.

It is but fair to add that on the mainland he has been a diligent and successful minister, and still labours assiduously in one of our finest country parishes, but in a more genial clime than that of Shetland.

CHAPTER III.

Church of Whalsay—Neglected state of Churches—Attendance at Church—Collections—Female dress—Kirk-Sessions—Discipline.

I HAVE already mentioned that Whalsay with the Out-Skerries constituted my parish. There is a church in each. Owing to the distance between them, about seven miles from land to land, the Out-Skerries were only occasionally visited. The church of Whalsay was situated on a sandy peninsula on the west side of the parish. It did not seem to have been built with a view to accommodate the majority of the population. If this had been the case it would have been built nearer the centre of the island. It was, I suppose, the want of roads and consequently the difficulty of carriage of building materials that had led to the site being on the sea shore. But to the place chosen it was easy to convey materials by sea, and land them on the shore, whereas their conveyance even a mile inland would have been a very serious undertaking. There were also the remains of a very large brough on the top of a hill close at hand, which seemed to have served as a quarry, and this may have in some measure led to the selection of the site. For those who chose to come in boats the place was very convenient. There was a pier and boathouse near the church. The heritors were bound to keep the church in repair in virtue of its being one of three original parish churches in the

Presbytery of Nesting. It was therefore commodious, and except in winter, comfortable.

A great and much-needed reformation had taken place in the churches and manses of the Presbytery of Olnafirth, a few years previous to my becoming a member of it. This was principally owing to the energetic action of the respected Clerk of Presbytery, the minister of Northmavine. Until a comparatively recent period several of the churches and manses were in a very wretched condition.

As showing the indifference to appearances which prevailed, a minister told me that when preaching his trial sermon after being presented, one thing which attracted his attention in particular was a long ladder hung for safety and preservation in front of the gallery. One of the first things he did after his ordination and induction was to remove so unseemly an object to a less conspicuous place outside the church.

In Whalsay I found all things arranged decently and in order. There was even a vestry, useful for keeping the pulpit bible, and where one could take breath after the walk to church. In cold or rainy weather the church-officer, who was also precentor, was so mindful as to light a fire, but it did not warm the apartment very much. The few peats that smoked on the hearth give out more smoke than heat. But William Hutchison, whose salary for both offices amounted to only a pound, gave his services from good will rather than for the emoluments they brought to him. He and his choir sang right heartily, more from attachment to the church than for filthy lucre's sake. On a fine day the walk to church, which was about a mile and a half distant from the manse, was most exhilarating. The

people could be seen coming from all parts of the island, holding out to the preacher the prospect of a numerous audience. They were very regular in their attendance on ordinances, so that unless in very rainy or boisterous weather the church was crowded.

The collections did not amount to a large sum when counted up at the end of the year. The coin usually put into the ladle was a farthing. As the collections were exchanged at the shop for silver, and as it was at the shop that my hearers provided themselves with those farthings, I thought that if the Session hoarded up the farthings and so stopped the supply of them, we might get halfpence put into the ladle instead. But if this should be done, I was given to understand that instead of farthings we should get nothing at all, so the experiment did not get a fair trial. After all, when circumstances are considered, a farthing from a crofter in Shetland is as much as a halfpenny from a well to do farmer in Scotland. I have known farmers paying from three hundred to four hundred pounds of rent, who drove a gig or dogcart on week-days, and esteemed themselves something of gentlemen, who did not exceed the halfpenny in giving to ordinary collections, and who, if absent at a market on a thanksgiving day when the annual collection was made for the infirmary, did not remember to give silver when next in church.

Several causes contributed to good attendance at church. As the people lived in seven or eight separate districts, an opportunity was afforded for friends and relatives for seeing and talking to each other for a few minutes before the service. There were few opportunities of meeting for amusement such as exist in other places. The church was the only place which the young women had of dis-

playing their finery. Their earnings at making kelp and knitting were for the most part expended in Lerwick, and it was only at church that those articles of dress, which are the pride and the envy of the female mind, could be exhibited. And to do them justice, there the young women of the place appeared tastefully and even elegantly attired. On one occasion I remember some of them being adorned in a rather conspicuous way. A young man who had been chief officer on a steamer in China on the Yangtre-kiang came home to see his friends. He had brought various curiosities and presents with him. When at Aden he had purchased a quantity of beautiful ostrich feathers. These he distributed among his female relatives, who of course stuck them into their bonnets and appeared in church with them. But at all times, it was wonderful to see how the latest fashions from Edinburgh, closely protected during the week from smoke in trunks, were brought out on the Sabbath day to dazzle and captivate admirers.

But while these secondary causes contributed to church attendance, I have reason to believe that higher motives were the prevailing cause. The people in general were exemplary in their conduct, and, so far as I could learn, lived under the habitual influence of religion. Family worship if not universal was very common. It was a very commendable feature of character here as in other parts of Shetland, that when the minister from necessity was absent, the congregation met as usual. The service in that case was conducted by the elders, one of them reading a sermon. This practice had arisen from the ministers having more than one church to preach in by turns.

I found a staff of excellent elders. They were highly

esteemed by the rest of the flock. Nothing could exceed their willingness to endeavour to discharge the duties of their office faithfully. Like the rest of the islanders they were crofters and fishermen, and were very prudent, sensible, and pious men. They were six in number. Each had a district assigned to him, in which he ruled. As in other parishes they were expected to visit the sick, to exercise a general supervision of morals, and if need were, to report to the minister anything which called for church discipline. When a child was to be baptized the father was required to present a certificate from the district elder, to the effect that his conduct was what it ought to be. And when the young men came to be instructed as catechumens they were expected to produce a certificate that they were of good moral character. The authority which the elders were thus enabled to exercise tended to procure for them respect and influence in their several districts. But as no system or method of government is without its defects and drawbacks, it was sometimes troublesome to have to attend to all the grievances and disputes which were brought before the Kirk-Session. This arose from the absence in past times of facilities for obtaining redress in courts of law. If cases of slander or assault, petty quarrels between neighbours, or charges of dishonesty arose, it was expected that the Kirk-Session would take cognisance of them, or adjudicate on them when brought before them. And when this was done the matter ended.

Occasionally, however, complaints caused annoyance to the minister. Every elder had a large following in the parish, consisting of relatives and connections. He was like the chief of a clan. So when an injury was done to

any of his friends, he brought a complaint against the delinquent before the Kirk-Session. The accused, on the other hand, had a friend at court in the person of one of the other elders, who became his advocate. In this way divisions arose, and it required a little management on the part of the minister to mediate between the contending parties, who strove not for justice so much as for victory. In private, complaints were brought to him. It was found, as the best way of testing the truth of these, to ask, "Will you state this in the presence of two witnesses." A minister told me, in regard to disputes which were constantly brought before him, that experience had taught him to draw the line at cases affecting the moral character, and which were properly subjects of church discipline. He said that if he had taken up every case which was brought before him, and delivered a judgment upon it, he would soon have emptied his church, or at least have been in constant trouble.

CHAPTER IV.

Absence of Minister—The Minister of Dunrossness in the Pulpit—Marriage of a Brother Minister—Catechising and Visiting under difficulties—Primitive mode of life—Benefit of resident Minister—Case of Chronic Rheumatism—Condition of Poor.

I HAVE mentioned the fondness of the people for long sermons and the probable cause. Another may here be mentioned, the protracted absence of the minister in bad weather. Suppose for instance a minister had three churches in his parish. He preached in each of these once every three weeks. If he was by stress of weather absent from any one of these on the appointed day the congregation had not the benefit of his services till three weeks afterwards. They had then a sermon from him only after an interval of six weeks. Hence he would naturally desire to make up for his absence as much as possible when it was in his power to be present. In this way the minister was wont to preach two sermons, without leaving the pulpit, with a few minutes breathing time between them. During this pause the congregation kept their seats. How the interval was sometimes improved by the minister will appear from the account which I received from an eye-witness. It will show not only the patience of the hearers but the primitive manners which prevailed to a comparatively recent period.

The minister of Dunrossness as part of his duty preached on alternate Sundays at Sandwick. This was

at a long distance from his manse, probably not less than twelve miles. There were no roads. He had either to walk or pick his way as best he could on horseback. It was his custom to preach two sermons with no longer interval than a few minutes during which a psalm was sung. Whenever the minister had ended the first sermon and given out a psalm he sat down in the pulpit. Then he took out a cold fowl, roast or boiled according to circumstances. This he tore to pieces with his hands and ate at his leisure without leaving the pulpit. His hearers meanwhile looked on and waited patiently until he had picked the bones. He then wiped his hands, and luncheon being over, gave out the text of his second discourse, and went on like a giant refreshed with wine.

Another minister at Dunrossness of whom I have heard, seems to have been equally primitive in his manners. In dress he was regardless of fashion, and studied comfort more than appearance. In cold weather he used to go to the pulpit on Sundays attired not in a Geneva gown but in a great coat, and though he was not girded about the waist like the prophet of old with a leathern girdle his great coat was made fast with what is called a simmins or piece of straw rope. He was not destitute, however, of a grim kind of humour and originality which displayed itself in various ways.

On one occasion his services were required at the mansion house, to perform the marriage ceremony between one of the laird's daughters and a gentleman in the neighbourhood. The minister came on the day appointed. There was a large company invited, so that the house was full of guests. All having been assembled, the marriage service went on. But the prayers and address were so

long, and the apartment so crowded, that some of the ladies fainted and were carried out of the room. At dinner the laird's sister took upon her to find fault with the minister for the excessive length of the service. All he replied was that when her turn came to be married, if he was the minister who should perform the ceremony, she would have no cause to complain of the service being too long.

It so happened that not long after, this same lady was married to the minister of Lerwick, in the same house. The minister of Dunrossness, as a matter of course, was asked to officiate. But forewarned by their previous experience the ladies determined to make themselves more comfortable than they were on the previous occasion. All the furniture was removed from the apartment in which the company were to assemble, and sofas and couches were placed along the sides of the room. On these the ladies took their seats, bringing with them their work, whether in the form of sewing, knitting, or embroidery, I do not know. At this they were employed when the minister came into the room. He at once understood the situation of affairs and resolved to be as brief at this time as he had been lengthy before. After a very short prayer he asked the bride and bridegroom if they were willing to be united in the bonds of matrimony. On their expressing their assent he proceeded with his address, which was as follows. Addressing himself to his fellow minister, he said, "Man, thou kens thy duty and can teach thy wife hers." He then declared them married persons, pronounced the benediction and the service was ended. The lady, who is reported to have had something of a temper, and to have been of a mascu-

line courage was very indignant, and declared then and there that she did not consider herself properly married. However, the only reply which she got was that if she was not satisfied she might apply to someone else. This, however, was not done.

It is but fair to state that such instances of eccentricity were not common. As a general rule the conduct of ministers in Shetland, isolated as they were from their brethren in Scotland and deprived of the advantages of polite and refined society, was in accordance with the requirements of their sacred office.

Having referred to preaching, I may now speak of my experience in visiting. I found that this work was performed in a very thorough and systematic way. It was generally done in spring and summer. Intimation is made from the pulpit where the minister intends to visit during the week. In this district every house is visited and a short service held in each. This consists, first in reading a portion of Scripture, the minister and the various members of the family old and young, reading in turn verse by verse. A short address or exposition is then usually given, based on the passage read. The younger members of the family are examined on their knowledge of the Shorter Catechism, and repeat passages of Scripture, Psalms, or Paraphrases. They are commended according to their proficiency. The service closes with prayer. This work though extremely laborious, was very agreeable. It was fatiguing, as the distance travelled was sometimes considerable, and as it was late in the evening before home could be reached, one was quite spent with hunger and fatigue. It was different in regard to receiving refreshment from what is generally the case in lowland

parishes. There you could partake with relish of the simplest fare, knowing that it was prepared with scrupulous cleanliness. And in the end of the day the work was brought to a close by sitting down to a sumptuous feast at the house of some well to do farmer, who with his wife and family, were delighted to have the pleasure of entertaining their highly esteemed pastor.

Candour compels me to state that in regard to domestic arrangements and culinary preparations there is yet much to learn in Shetland. The houses are constructed in such a way as that warmth is the chief thing sought after, without regard to smoke. Then, not to speak of dogs and cats, there is generally a young pig at the fireside, which has been brought into the house, until, past the delicate period of infancy, he can contend in the stye with cold and wet. The pig is quite at home. He has the freedom of the whole house, where he moves about snuffing for morsels of food. But the fireside is his favourite lounge. There he gets his meals. These consist of the remains of food left over by the family, and are often given to him in the pot in which the family dinner has been cooked. At times he sits on his haunches, looking gravely into the fire ; but as he is of a lively disposition, his gravity does not last long. With his snout he often amuses himself among the ashes of the peat fire ; he, however, takes good care not to let that valuable member too near a live coal. Besides a young pig, a lamb that has lost its mother is sometimes taken home to be nursed. I have even seen a sick cow taken into the dwelling house, as more likely to recover near the fireside than in the byre. For this there is more excuse than for the sordid meanness of peasants in the south east of France, who are represented

as living in the cowbyre on account of its warmth, and that they may save the expense of fuel. Besides what I have mentioned there is another source of uneasiness, generally of long standing. In most houses there is a corner appropriated for holding peats. These are not brought home and built up in stacks, but are carried home a creelful at a time and thrown down in a heap in the foresaid corner. In due course an accumulation of dross takes place which, according to naturalists, is highly favourable to the propagation of certain insects of a lively and mercurial disposition. These though they increase and multiply where they are, have not the slightest objection to emigrate ; on the contrary, they evince the greatest desire to entrust themselves to a total stranger and depart along with him. The houses seldom receive a thorough cleaning, and thus from the lack of cleanliness, which by some is said to be next to godliness, there is a certain amount of unpleasantness felt in entering and departing from them. There are exceptions—nice cleanly well-kept dwellings, with an air of plenty and comfort about them, but until of late these were few in number. However, there is no doubt but that extended intercourse and the greater diffusion of wealth will prove a remedy for evils hitherto almost unconsciously endured.

From the various causes which I have referred to, the work of a minister in visiting was very laborious and sometimes disagreeable. I have felt after going through ten or twelve houses so tired and worn out that I rather crawled than walked home. Yet it had to be done, as a work of the greatest importance ; and the warm welcome that was given in every house made one forget the temporary inconveniences. It is in this way that a

minister comes to know the members of his flock, and by personal intercourse cement those cordial relations which ought to exist between pastor and people. I do not speak here of the visitation of the sick and aged which, as a matter of course, takes place oftener ; but for the poor, a visit from the minister is a great comfort. This is especially the case in many parts of the country where landlords are non-resident. Poverty prevails to a large extent. The chief dependence is on fishing. When this fails, or when deaths by drowning occur, want ensues in families ; and not unfrequently an old couple is left without any help from their children. These may have gone abroad or may themselves be in straitened circumstances. I was often grieved by the sight of distress which I could not relieve ; but even the sympathy expressed by the minister, and the religious exercises engaged in, were received with gratitude and strengthened the resignation, which I found so generally entertained among the poorest and most destitute. There have not been wanting individuals who have accused the Shetlanders of being plausible and smooth-tongued ; and it would be ascribing that perfection to human nature which it does not possess if no hypocrisy were found to exist ; but in many cases which came under my observation, I have the best reason to believe that the profession made was genuine and sincere.

It would be a good thing for many who complain of hard times, and speak as if they were unjustly dealt with by Providence, if they were to see the wretched hovels, the want of comfort, the scanty fare, the privation borne without a murmur. Seeing this, I have often thought that the very poor are more sensible of blessings than the

rich, and more ready to feel gratitude than they are. One case I remember was that of an old couple who lived at a place called Berg. The name of the place, like other names in Whalsay, is expressive of the appearance of the locality. It was a bluff rising precipitously from the sea shore. Here apart from neighbours the old man and wife lived. Their family had grown up and had left them. Some were dead, others had emigrated, with the exception of a son who was married, and who was able to give them very little help. The man had been a weaver, and the loom was still in its place, but his employment at no time lucrative, was now of very little value to him. His wife had suffered from chronic rheumatism for the long period of fourteen years. During all this time she had slept at night by the fireside seated in an arm-chair. She found that if she went to bed its warmth increased the pain which she suffered so much, that it became excruciating, and she was obliged to rise and resume her seat in the arm-chair by the fireside. In this condition, old and infirm, shrunk and withered, she showed the greatest patience. She made no complaint, but was quite cheerful and contented. Another case, by which I was much impressed, and which showed the good effect of religion in producing comfort and resignation under poverty and bereavement, was that of an aged elder and his wife. Their family had grown up and left them, and were able to afford them very little assistance ; yet they were very contented and never breathed a word of complaint. They one day told me a very affecting story in connection with the death of their youngest son. Along with about a dozen young men from the island, who went to sea on foreign voyages about the same time to different parts, he became a sailor.

Strange to say not one of these returned home, and their deaths from various causes deterred the young men of the place from going abroad for a long time. The young man of whom I speak, as his parents told me, took ill at sea and was admitted into an hospital at New York. He died there after a short illness of consumption. One of the doctors who attended him wrote to his parents informing them of his disease. The kind and sympathizing terms of his letter were received by them with much gratitude. But there was one circumstance which he mentioned, which above all things tended to console them for the loss of their son, and this was that besides regularly reading his Bible, he was not ashamed morning and evening to go to his knees while he was able and engage in prayer.

It must be confessed that Protestants are somewhat diffident in regard to this duty when among strangers. Hugh Miller mentions in his notes of travel in the North of England, that he had on one occasion to pass the night in an inn in a double-bedded room. After he himself had gone to bed an elderly gentleman who was to share the room opened the door and came in. After waiting some time as if to be sure that he who had gone to bed was asleep, the gentleman went to his knees and engaged in prayer in a most earnest and fervent manner. With all the poverty which is met with, there are comforts enjoyed to which in large towns the poor are strangers. Fuel is abundant, and therefore a good fire is to be had whenever it is needed ; indeed the fire seldom goes out in summer or winter. Water is in abundance without a rate. There is no annoyance from drunken or vicious neighbours. The humblest have a dwelling to themselves. Fish is plentiful. If age or infirmity prevents them from fishing there is

always a friend or neighbour to give a share of what has been caught. In this way the privations of the very poorest are mitigated.

CHAPTER V.

The Out-Skerries—Abundance of Sillocks—Lighthouse Recreations—Lighthouse Keepers—Tameness of Eider Ducks when breeding—First visit to Skerries.

A VERY interesting part of my parish consisted of a group of islands lying to the north-east of Whalsay. These are the Out-Skerries. They consist of three islands named Housay, or house island, Grunay, or green island, and Brouray, with one or two small islands lying to the south. There are ruins of former dwellings in one of the islands called Pechts Houses. From this it would appear that at a very remote period there have been dwellers in this remote locality. The three islands which I have named lie in such a way as to form a land-locked harbour. The best entrance faces the south-east. From their outlying position these islands form a very convenient station for prosecuting the various fishings; they have therefore been frequented for a long time during the summer season by fishermen from other places.

The stationary population amounts to about 150. The people are in general fairly well off, and are a good-looking healthy race. Their chief dependence is on fishing, as though the land in cultivation is of very good quality, it is limited in extent. The ground which is capable of cultivation is constantly under crop. Oats, bear and potatoes are the crops raised. There is no grass sown, turnips or fallow. The soil is kept in good heart by abundance of

manure, which can be applied in as great quantities as is necessary. Fish offal can be got at all seasons, not only during summer from the cod, ling, and herring fishings, but during winter from sillocks. These, plentiful at all times, are in some seasons caught in extraordinary numbers. To avoid the birds which prey upon them in the open sea, such as the gulls, and especially their dreaded enemy the cormorant, the sillocks seek the shelter of the shore. In a harbour or land-locked place, they appear like a bank of dark sand or a solid mass, so that by dipping down a hand net a boat can soon be filled with them. Probably from the abundance of food, the sillocks here are larger than in other places. As many as 2000 gallons of oil have been made in one winter in the Skerries from their livers. One winter two young men earned forty pounds from this source. From the abundance of fish the little plots of ground were covered ancle deep with offal which could not be otherwise used, and large flocks of gulls from other places assembled to share in the spoil taken from the sea. In summer the home and stranger boats which come chiefly from Lunnasting, prosecute the cod and ling fishing, living at the lodges, and going home on Saturday to their families. In this way, at the times of the boats setting out to sea and returning home laden with fish, there is a scene of bustle and excitement. The Skerries are famous for their salubrity. They are chiefly of the limestone formation. There is no peat moss. The ground is hard and firm, so that walks may be enjoyed in different directions. And small as these islands look at a distance, there is greater variety of scenery and longer walks to be had than could be imagined. A week could be spent here in summer if the weather was fine,

with the highest sense of enjoyment. One of the islands, Grunay, which lies east of the others, is held by the Lighthouse Commissioners. On it is built a block of houses in which the light keepers and their families reside. As the lighthouse itself is on a small rocky island adjacent, with which in stormy weather communication is interrupted, there are three keepers at this establishment. They are so arranged that two are always on duty and one at liberty. The two who are on duty in the lighthouse have their work to do during the day in cleaning the lamps and cooking. They can read when the weather is such as to prevent their going outside. In winter their life must be dreary enough. During the few hours of daylight it is seldom that a sail is seen on the vast expanse of sea which lies around between them and Norway. Every attention, however, is paid to enable them to live in comfort. In addition to their usual pay, stores of provisions are furnished by the Lighthouse Commissioners for fear of continued bad weather confining them to the lighthouse beyond the usual time on which they are on duty. In summer matters are different. The Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses are expected to make their visit—strangers occasionally call to see the place. Boats can be seen going to the fishing and returning from it. Now and then a large vessel passes bound to Archangel or the whale fishing, and later in the season one or two may be observed on their way south. But this is rare, as the track for the ports of the continent lies farther east. The men can also go outside, though they are not permitted to leave the small island. There was a colony of rabbits on the place which were objects of interest to them. To these they used to throw parings of turnips or other vege-

tables, which induced them to put off a little of their natural shyness. But the scanty supply of grass which grew on the rock, and the heavy seas which swept to the base of the lighthouse in winter, prevented the rabbits from increasing. The eider duck sometimes formed its nest in the rocks quite close at hand. The nest I saw was on the level of the ground between two stones, and the bird when sitting did not move, though in passing by you could have stooped down and laid your hand upon her. It was a matter of surprise how the young brood was got down into the water, as the place was so rocky and precipitous.

On the island of Grunay, where the dwelling houses are, there is a considerable extent of excellent pasturage. This is let to the keepers, and supports a number of sheep, which are their property. These find food enough in the summer on the grass ; in winter when the pasture is bare their keep is supplemented by turnips. These are grown in a large garden, which has been trenched and enclosed by the Commissioners. The men complained that the rent, which they conceived had been partly fixed by the great expense of providing the garden, was too high, and that with all their care and attention they had little or no profit for their trouble. Looked at in the light of furnishing employment for the keepers when off duty, as each in turn acted as shepherd, it was an excellent arrangement ; and as people tire of any employment unless it is profitable, it would be well if the pasture was let on such terms as to yield a little profit. The lighthouse people were quite a colony by themselves. There were the three keepers and their families, for they were generally married men. Then there was the master of the lighthouse smack and his family. These were separate and distinct from

the other islanders. The smack which I have mentioned was kept up by the Commissioners for the service of the lighthouse. It sailed weekly to Symbister for letters and necessaries, and at longer intervals to Lerwick for the stores required for the lighthouse. By the kindness of the Commissioners a passage was always given to the minister of Whalsay when he required it. As the vessel was fitted up, not for carrying cargo like an ordinary coaster, but more like a yacht, there was a vast difference between sailing in it and going in an open boat.

My first visit to the Skerries was in the month of July, during the fishing season, and was made in one of the boats called sixerns. These, as the name implies, were rowed by six men while one steered. It was Sunday. At this time a six-oared boat was to be procured only on this day, as during the week the boats were engaged at the fishing. The day I went was calm, but it was so foggy that we could see only for a short distance ahead. The boatmen of course had a compass, but had to depend a good deal on their knowledge of the tide and currents; for in the finest day between Whalsay and the Skerries, the sea is in several places in a state of commotion. Currents called strings abound, which, if there was dependence on the compass alone, would carry the boat past its destination. When the wind rises to a gale it is dangerous for an open boat to venture into these strings. As it was, when the mist cleared away we found ourselves about two miles to the south of the usual landing place. On reaching this I found quite a crowd waiting my arrival. There had been a long vacancy, and they were glad to receive a visit from the minister. I had sent no notice of my coming, but they had in some way or other heard of

my intention the day before. I was heartily welcomed, and led by the schoolmaster, Mr. Peterson, to his house. Not having been accustomed to be cooped up for hours in an open boat I felt quite stiff and benumbed on landing; but this feeling soon passed away in the hearty and hospitable entertainment which I received in the schoolhouse. After resting about an hour I preached in the little church to a most attentive audience. The church was used during the week as a school. It stood in the midst of its little churchyard, which was enclosed by a stone wall and iron gate to prevent trespassing. It lay in a hollow, and was in the most sheltered spot that could have been found. There had been at one time a ministry consisting of the Skerries, the Fair Isle, and Foula, but this arrangement had lasted but a short time, and the Skerries had then been joined to Nesting. One can conceive the spiritual destitution as regards ordinances which existed until lately. The people had to go to the parish church of Nesting to attend the communion, which was celebrated once a year. If it was rainy weather or the sea rough their condition on the sea in open boats, and on the land without a place of lodging, was wretched. Then it was a rare thing for the Skerries to be visited by a minister. It was only within the last thirty or forty years that the minister of Nesting, and after him the minister of Whalsay, made arrangements for regular visits and for dispensing the communion. As the men who brought me across had to go to the fishing the next day, I returned home in the evening.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Peterson Schoolmaster and Catechist—His Teaching and Preaching—Improvements effected by him—Schoolhouse built by Mr. Arthur Anderson—Reasons for being an Independent—Mr. Peterson's high character—His people in search of him—Reasons for not marrying—Rents—A Whalsay fiddler—Destitution in the Skerries—Salubrity of group.

My next visit was for the purpose of dispensing the Communion, and embraced the greater part of a busy week. There was a day of preparation, on which there was divine service in the church; the different families were visited at their houses; the school was examined, and the knowledge of the catechumens tested. And then on Sabbath Day there were the usual Communion services, and the thanksgiving sermon in the evening.

While in the Skerries I lived at the schoolhouse; and here I wish to do justice to the memory of the schoolmaster. He was one of the best men I have ever met. He was like those men of whom we read who live and labour, not to amass wealth or acquire fame, but for the sake of doing good. His life was something like that of John Pounds or Felix Neff, or other worthies of whom we read. In this remote locality he lived thirty years. This space of time was one continued round of labour for the welfare of the community over whom he presided. He taught his scholars during the week with the greatest diligence. He was patient, kindly, and earnest in impart-

ing instruction; in short, one of those who have been called heaven-born teachers. He was able to keep order without harshness or severity. On Sabbath day he preached twice in a most impressive manner, with a natural eloquence and persuasiveness which charmed and edified his hearers. He also taught a Sabbath School, which old and young attended. As it was part of my duty to examine the Sabbath School, I had the opportunity of seeing the tact which he possessed in asking questions, and the kind and genial way in which he managed his school. He was well acquained with the Scriptures, and was quite original in the illustrations which he employed when imparting instruction. From the gravity of his demeanour, the serious and earnest manner which he possessed in teaching and preaching, as well as by his uniformly prudent and exemplary conduct, he was held in the highest estimation, and universally beloved. Most of the inhabitants had passed through his hands as pupils. Instructing their children was thus rendered comparatively easy. He had great difficulty, in beginning his work as a teacher, in enforcing habits of cleanliness; for want of this the parents were to blame, and not the children. Delicacy forbids me to speak of the dirty condition in which some of the mothers were content to allow their children to appear at school. When such instances were only too apparent, and there was thus danger of others being contaminated, Mr. Peterson sent them home, with instructions not to return until their clothes were washed. The mothers were in great wrath at this treatment. But it occurred to him that if such cases of temporary dismissal were accompanied with a present of soap this might mollify the resentment of parents, and be an effectual remedy

for the evil. And it was so. In due course the children came to school with clothes and persons clean and neat. The reformation extended not only to the children, but to those of riper age.

Mr. Peterson was a native of Lerwick. He had learned the trade of a slater, and was esteemed an excellent workman. But his eyesight had never been very good, and an illness which he had when grown up had deprived him altogether of the sight of one eye, and weakened the other. In this state he was not so fit to follow his trade as formerly ; but he still continued to be engaged at it with more or less regularity, when a circumstance occurred which led to his going to the Skerries.

Mr. Arthur Anderson, chairman of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, was one of those Shetlanders who, by their abilities and perseverance, have risen to eminence. After a mercantile career, in which he earned a competence, he visited his native place, and endeavoured in different ways to contribute to the welfare of his countrymen. He had heard of the destitute condition of the people of the Skerries in regard to education, and wished to do something for the welfare of the young. He accordingly made arrangements for building a dwelling-house for a teacher, and providing a salary at his sole expense. On making inquiries for a suitable person to act as a teacher and conduct a Sabbath School, Mr. Peterson's name was mentioned. He had been favourably known as a Sabbath School teacher in the denomination with which he was connected, the Independents ; he was of excellent character, and the practical knowledge which he had as a tradesman would be useful, it was thought, in various ways. Accordingly one day Mr. Peterson was a good deal surprised when,

being met on the street in Lerwick by Dr. Hamilton of Bressay, he was asked if he was willing to go to the Skerries as a teacher. Thinking he did not possess the necessary qualifications, he was at first unwilling to undertake the office, but being urged to go at last consented. An excellent dwelling-house was then built, and as Mr. Peterson was present to inspect the work, it was made wind and water tight. It has continued, with very little repair, to be a comfortable and commodious dwelling. Mr. Anderson paid a salary until his death took place. Unfortunately no provision had been made in his will for making the salary permanent. In this way, after several years' service, Mr. Peterson was left with only the school fees to live upon, and it seemed as if he would have to leave the place. However, a salary was got from the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland. Then the Lighthouse Commissioners gave a small supplement, in consideration of his teaching the light-keepers' children. When the Education Act was passed, in virtue of his long service as a teacher he received a certificate, which entitled him to earn a grant. In this way he was enabled to remain in the Skerries; and latterly, from the sources which I have mentioned, he possessed an income which permitted him to live in comfort.

Ministers of all denominations were made welcome by him, and entertained at his house during their stay. These visits, it may be imagined, were of rare occurrence. My stay in his house was very agreeable. He was a pleasant and cheerful companion, and though an Independent, was by no means hostile to the Church of Scotland, or bigoted in his ideas. His parents, he said, had left the Kirk, not on the ground of doctrine, but because they

were dissatisfied with the deadness which prevailed. He gave as an example, the indifference shown to immorality by ministers, when those in high life were guilty of it. A gentleman in Lerwick had been delated before the Kirk Session for immorality. The transgressor duly appeared; but as soon as he came, the minister immediately stepped forward and shook hands with him before proceeding to discipline, as if nothing had occurred which had rendered his presence necessary. He then proceeded to admonish him with regard to his sin. Now, Mr. Peterson held that for the time being, the usages of polite society should have been held in abeyance, and that the minister should have only manifested his usual courtesy when the offender had been absolved and restored to the communion of the church. This was one instance which he mentioned as having given great offence to those who cared for discipline. As for himself, he said he had always a warm heart for the Kirk, but having once joined the Independents, he did not choose to leave that body. He occupied a somewhat anomalous position; he was a Dissenter supported by the Church of Scotland, and Sabbath after Sabbath preached to those who were members of the church. Yet it was in his case an excellent arrangement. He was on terms of free communion with the Church of Scotland, and made it his boast that though overtures had been made to him by dissenters for the purpose of gaining a footing in his diocese, he had always discouraged them. He said that as he ate the bread of the Church of Scotland, he would have considered himself a traitor if he had been in any way instrumental in withdrawing members from her pale. I can recall with pleasure the time I spent under his roof. Though not extensively read, he had thought over what

he had found in the books he possessed, and exercised an independent judgment in forming his opinions. As the bulk of his studies was in the way of preparation for preaching on Sabbath, divinity was the subject which had engrossed most of his attention. Here he was no mean proficient, and delighted to talk and argue on points of doctrine. He was of sincere and unaffected piety. This showed itself in no harsh or austere manner, for he was always of a happy and cheerful disposition. According to his means, he was very kind and charitable to those who were in need of his assistance, and was always desirous to show gratitude to those who had in any way favoured him. I never heard him address an audience, but from the fact that the people were so regular in attendance on his preaching, and from what I have been told, he must have been listened to with profit and delight. When living in his house he wished me to conduct family worship. I suggested that we should do this alternately; and I do not think that in extempore prayer, I have ever heard any one excel him in earnestness and solemnity of manner, and in the choice and appropriate language which he used. At the same time he was not without his faults. He was somewhat irascible in temper, and jealous of his authority being interfered with. He rarely left the scene of his labours, to which he had become attached as the people were attached to him. If at any time he had to go to Lerwick on business, which he did during his school holidays once in two or three years, his absence was regarded with impatience. While I was residing in Shetland, he had occasion to leave home for a week or two on a visit to Lerwick. On his return he came to stay for a few days at the manse. After he had been absent

a fortnight from his little flock, their anxiety about him became so great that, fearing he was ill or that some mishap had befallen him, it was resolved that a party should set out in search of him. This was accordingly done. A six-oared boat started for Lerwick without loss of time. Calling at Whalsay, information was got that Mr. Peterson was staying at the manse. Thither the party accordingly went, and though it had been agreed that he was to stay a few days longer, the Skerry people would take no denial, and he had to return along with them.

To me, I do not know why, he was very communicative in regard to his former history and private affairs. I trust that I do not violate the confidence placed in me when I say that, though a bachelor, he had like many others who lead a single life, entertained thoughts of marriage. The object of his regard was a Skerry young woman, whose name he mentioned, and who at the time of my visit was married to another, and was the mother of a large family. I am not aware that she was conscious of the schoolmaster's regard for her, but he was led to give up the idea of marrying her by what he considered her want of sense. Calling one evening, when school labours were over, at her father's cottage, he found the whole family actively engaged in unloading a boat of peats. Securing the winter fuel is a matter of the highest importance everywhere, but in the Skerries where the peats have to be brought from Whalsay in open boats across a sea often dangerous, no minute is to be lost. It was therefore necessary to unload the boat before it was completely dark, so that if weather permitted, another cargo might be gone for as soon as it was daylight on the morrow. Going into the house, he found the young woman there.

A fiddler was playing and she and two or three more of her companions were dancing. On seeing this he went no further than the door, and thinking, as he said, that she was not suitable for a poor man's wife, he gave up the intention which he had formed, and never more thought of marrying. This leads me by an easy transition to mention that at one time he used to amuse himself in playing on the violin in the evening, and to relate an anecdote which he told me in connection with it. When I knew him he had entirely given up taking the violin into his hands, but it hung up on the wall of his parlour by the fireside, and it was well known that he possessed it.

Notwithstanding Mr. Peterson's objections to promiscuous dancing, which arose from the riot which he knew was wont to accompany what are called rants and barn-bundlings in Shetland, the young folks of the Skerries contrived to get some amusement on the long winter evenings, in the form of an assembly in some dwelling or barn. There they danced to the sound of music, supplied by a fiddler for a moderate renumeration. A meeting of this kind had been arranged and all due preparations made; but having no one amongst themselves who could supply the music, they sent to Whalsay for one who was in the habit of acting as chief musician on such occasions. He came accordingly, and in good time, but on his arrival he found that unfortunately he had forgotten his fiddle. What was to be done? They could not dance without music, and all their preparations, as it seemed, had been made in vain. One of them, however, recollected that Mr. Peterson had a violin. But no one was bold enough to undertake to go and ask the loan of it, as they all knew

that he discouraged meetings of the kind in which they were to be engaged. But the fiddler, who was a greedy avaracious character, and withal, something of a religious professor, was not to be baulked. He undertook the task of calling on Mr. Peterson and borrowing the coveted instrument. He went about the work with a good deal of tact and skill as he thought. Having gone to the schoolhouse and gained admission to the schoolmaster's presence, he began to talk of matters in general. Then referring to Mr. Peterson's labours in the little community, he expressed his hope that the scholars were doing well, that the people were attending divine service regularly, and that the young men were, as he called it, "learning to mak a prayer." From this he artfully glided to the statement that it was necessary for them to have a little harmless recreation. This having been concurred in, he said that he had just come over from Whalsay to play for an hour or two in one of the houses, but as he had forgotten his fiddle, would Mr. Peterson oblige him with his one. This request was met with an indignant denial. The object of his religious conversation was now seen. "If he had asked the fiddle at once on coming I would have given it," said the schoolmaster, "but to come with a hypocritical profession and think to gain his end in that way, it was out of the question." It reminded me of the man who came to Dr. Chalmers in distress of mind about Melchisedec, and who, when the Doctor had endeavoured to remove his difficulties, ended by asking the loan of a pound. However, the Whalsayman got a boat's crew mustered without delay, crossed the firth, a distance of fully eight miles, and returned the same night before it was too late for the entertainment. Age and increasing

infirmities at length led to Mr. Peterson's retiring from active duty. He left the Skerries and went to reside during the remainder of his days in Lerwick.

At the Skerries I saw one exception to the statement which I made, that the people were well off. This was a very distressing case of a married couple and their family. The man was about forty years of age, and had at one time been in comfortable circumstances. He had a croft and was able during the fishing season to earn eighteen shillings a week, being very dexterous as a fish splitter. He married a woman who, though good looking, was somewhat silly. She persuaded him to give up the croft. Being thriftless, she soon brought her husband into debt. From one degree of misery to another they sank so low that when I went to visit them, I found their dwelling to be an outhouse of the most wretched description. There was not a single article of furniture or domestic utensil except an iron pot in which to boil fish or potatoes. There was a little straw in a corner of the place where they huddled together at night. The parents were absent. Except for a shirt, one or two of the children were literally naked, cowering about the fire. I have seen misery in various places—tinkers camping outside in winter among snow for instance—but such utter wretchedness as this I never saw. The neighbours were kind to a degree, but the folly of the children seemed to be on a par with that of their parents. Sheets had been given to them to sleep in. These they took outside and amused themselves with them at play, holding them up as sails and running about with them until they were torn to shreds. The bits of furniture which had been possessed at one time had been burnt for fuel. The sole remaining possession was a leaky

boat, in which I saw the father and the eldest boy, aged about eleven, rowing across the stormy sound from Whalsay. The children did not seem to suffer from the cold when running about outside, though the temperature in a raw and windy day was not much above the freezing point. The inspector of poor and the authorities were at a loss what to do in the matter as the man was able-bodied.

The Skerries are locally in high reputation for their salubrity. How this should be so I cannot well understand, as they do not seem to differ from the other islands. Possibly the limestone formation may have something to do with it. At any rate I have heard of several persons who had, when ill, visited the place and left it in improved health. One thing in particular was mentioned to me, that out of a population of 150, there had been no deaths for several years, and out of 40 children born previous to 1874, all were alive at that date. This showed a very low death rate. A book might well be written regarding various other matters connected with the Skerries. The geology, the natural history, the traditions and history of the district, the wrecks that have occurred, all these things might be described so as to form a very interesting subject. Let me now speak of another part of a minister's duty.

CHAPTER VII.

Presbytery Meetings—Travelling to them—Place of Meeting—Conduct of Business—Second Diet—Toasts on Highlands—Excuses for shortening procedure—The Synod—Should be united to Synod of Orkney.

ATTENDANCE at meetings of Presbytery is part of a minister's duty. Such meetings are very useful. Under our form of church government they are absolutely necessary for the purposes of discipline and order. To the individual minister they are valuable as furnishing opportunities of getting council and advice. They break the monotony of every day labour, and help to remind him that he is not alone in the work in which he is engaged. They are more particularly valuable for the purposes of promoting social intercourse in country districts where ministers live secluded from the rest of the world. But in Shetland such meetings are often attended only with great difficulty and inconvenience, not to speak of danger. I never indeed heard of a minister being drowned in going to a meeting of Presbytery, nor yet in returning from it. But journeying by sea or land in Shetland even now is far different from what it is in the south. In my own case I had to hire a boat, with which I crossed to the mainland. This was sometimes a sail of six miles. After this there was a distance of nearly as many miles to be walked. Fortunately on getting off the sea there was a good macadamised road. It is only those

who have been living destitute of the convenience of roads, and have been obliged to walk over heath and bog for months, who can appreciate the delight I felt in again walking on a hard and level road. It was a positive luxury. Now-a-days when people will scarcely walk a couple of miles, but will rather go by train, they are hardly aware of the pleasure of walking on a smooth and level highway. The boatmen having drawn the boat on shore waited my return. They had acquaintances among the neighbouring families, and were thus able to indulge in the pleasing occupation of imparting and receiving information. The other members had also long journeys to perform. Some of them were at a much greater distance than I from the Presbytery seat, but they could all come by land, though round about, and ride on horseback if they chose. Our place of meeting was a church vestry. This was an exceedingly cold and cheerless apartment. There was generally an attempt at a fire; but it was only the struggling vitality of a few half-lighted peats which smouldered on the hearth, and whose smoke lazily moved in clouds as it ascended the chimney. A table, a form, and a couple of chairs composed the furniture.

As it was quite an event to have a fire in the place, it may be imagined that there was no great amount of warmth or luxury to be enjoyed as we sat around the table for the despatch of business. Nor is it to be supposed that long speeches were made during our discussions. Flights of oratory were not to be looked for when there were no reporters, and it would hardly be expected that in a meeting which consisted when all were present of only six ministers, the most powerful argu-

ments could change opinions previously formed. It was rare, however, that all the six clerical members were present. Of those present, one was moderator, and another clerk, so that the rank and file consisted generally of two or three. I do not speak of the elders. They were sometimes mustered by their respective ministers, but they had too high an opinion of the sense and wisdom of their spiritual guide to differ from him if a question was put to the vote. When the business was ended all prepared to return home without delay. Though we might have sat two or three hours in the place of meeting, sometimes with feet cold and numb, there was no dinner or refreshment of any kind to be had. Very different this from similar meetings in many other presbyteries. There the business of the day is followed up by attendance on what is called the second diet. The members dine in a social way. An ample dinner is partaken of, with the moderator and clerk presiding,—the one at the head the other at the foot of the table. When the cloth is removed the usual loyal and patriotic toasts are given from the chair. After this every one speaks either in proposing the health of one of the company, or in replying to the toast proposed in his own honour. During the second diet, if there have been any heated discussions previously, or any words said in haste which ought not to have been said, amends are made and good feeling restored. Let it not be supposed that in all this there is any intemperance or want of the sobriety which becomes the ministerial character. Whatever may be said of the olden times, so far as my experience goes, there is as great a degree of temperance exercised at

presbytery meetings as in the best conducted social meetings in the land.

The absence of toasts is now with some deemed fashionable. They have given way to what are called sentiments. It is quite a matter of taste. I cannot help, however, telling a story with regard to toasts and their omission which I once heard. At a presbytery meeting in a remote part of the Highlands a strange minister was present. He was a member of a Presbytery on the Borders, and was on a visit. He was, as a matter of course, invited to dine as a guest. After dinner, though there was no wine there was no lack of whiskey. This each made into toddy, according to his taste, weak or strong just as he liked it. No set speeches were made nor toasts proposed. After each had drunk two or three tumblers and no voice was heard above the hum of conversation, the stranger got to his feet and craving the leave of the company begged to propose a toast. All were silent until the Moderator, with solemn voice, told him that God's people in that part of the country were not in the habit of drinking toasts. He felt himself rebuked, but rejoined that he had been in a good many places, but had never before seen God's people drink so much toddy.

At our meetings in the vestry of the Church of Olnafirth there was no danger of exceeding either in meat or drink. There was neither to be had. A tradition survived that there had once been a social entertainment in the form of tea, but before my time this had vanished. There was no vestige of cup or saucer. With all this the business was well conducted. We had as clerk a man of unquestionable ability, who was able to arrange matters of

detail so as to prevent unnecessary speaking. He had been instrumental in doing much good to the church. Not to speak of what he had done by voluntary effort in his own parish, he was the means of renovating churches and manses in the presbytery. Many of them were formerly in a wretched state. Ministers had formerly left themselves very much in the hands of heritors, whose interest it was to spend as little as possible on the ecclesiastical buildings. Unwilling to take the necessary legal steps to enforce their rights, both ministers and people endured much discomfort. To the people this did not matter quite so much. In bad weather they could stay at home. The minister could not; and then the discomfort in church was only for two or three hours a week. Whereas a minister and his family had often from one year's end to another to inhabit a damp, draughty, and decayed building, which heritors were very slow to repair when repair was needed. Occasionally the irregular procedure of presbyteries in the far north, when conducting settlements, has formed the ground of complaints and appeal to the General Assembly. No doubt it is well if in every case the strict letter of the law is observed; but this is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, without giving rise to great inconvenience and long protracted vacancies. For example, when a vacancy takes place there is a meeting of Presbytery, at which a member is appointed to take the necessary steps towards the election and appointment of a minister to the vacant parish. When an appointment is made, a meeting of the Presbytery is held to examine and sustain it. If there are no objections, the presentee has trials prescribed to him if he has not been previously ordained. He is then taken on

trials at a subsequent meeting of Presbytery. All things being satisfactory, a day is fixed on which the Presbytery meet for his induction. Now if this takes place in the winter when members have to travel, it may be thirty miles over roads barely passable, or have to cross arms of the sea, and when any of their number may from age or infirmity be unable to leave home, it may be easily seen how in a Presbytery of half-a-dozen members it may be difficult at all times to obtain a quorum. If difficulty arises in the case of an undisputed settlement, the hardship and difficulty of attendance is increased, when in the case of a disputed settlement more frequent meetings may be necessary. Should there be a necessity of adjournment in connection with proceedings in the case, this cannot sometimes be done to the next day, as the manse being untenanted, there may be no suitable lodging in the neighbourhood. If then the proceedings are carried on in good faith and there is no objection made, it need not be wondered at if a Presbytery, in the circumstances I have mentioned, should omit to take all the steps which are prescribed by the regulations of the Assembly in the induction of ministers. In the case of any difference of opinion existing in a congregation regarding candidates, or any objections being made to the settlement of a presentee, caution would need to be exercised and the strict letter of the law observed. The Synod met once a year in Lerwick, the county town. For a long time this took place in the beginning of May, and consequently a short time before the meeting of Assembly. This seemed a suitable arrangement, for in this way appeals could be heard from Presbyteries and then go direct to the Supreme Court. Latterly the meetings have been held in

autumn. As the number of parishes is seventeen th muster would not have been so large as that of some Presbyteries, even if all the members had been present. But notwithstanding this there were parties and divisions. Like Ajax and Ulysses, the leaders strove in wordy debate and showed as great eagerness in obtaining each for himself a majority on any question that arose, as if the fate of empires hung trembling in the balance. I cannot say that the hearers were always much impressed by the eloquence of the speakers, or that the debates, at least presented in the pages of the local "Thunderer," were calculated to find much favour in the estimation of the public.

For all useful purposes which the Synod of Shetland serves by itself, I think that it would be better if joined to the Synod of Orkney. The reasons for their separate existence in the absence of proper communication, do not now exist. It is easier now to go to Kirkwall from Unst or Walls, than it was formerly to go from these places to Lerwick. It would also be for the advantage of the Synod of Orkney, which also labours under the defect of paucity of numbers. If the Synods were united, questions would be dealt with in a more unbiassed spirit and in all likelihood with more regard to the merits. The debates would be lifted out of the region of petty likes and dislikes, and a higher tone imparted to the discussions which might arise on ecclesiastical subjects.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ministerial Intercourse—Communion Services—Communion at Skerries and at Fair Isle—Going to Assembly by way of Hamburg—Watchmaker carried to Greenland and to London.

If the opportunities of ministerial intercourse in the performance of stated and official duties in connection with church business were thus few and far between, they were not much more frequent at other times. Such things as an exchange of pulpits was rare, except it may be in one or two places. At communion seasons the minister often had to do all the work without assistance. He preached on the fast and preparation days. On Sabbath he dispensed the communion, sometimes giving addresses to as many as five tables, then on Monday he preached the thanksgiving sermon. Even at Lerwick, from want of expected assistance, the minister had occasionally to do all the work of a Communion Sabbath alone. At this time he preached the action sermon and served five tables, giving suitable addresses at each; and these addresses were of considerable length.

Of late years it has become the usual practice to have only one table, and this is, by most people, admitted to be a great improvement. When there was a large congregation with five or six tables, and there were ministers from neighbouring parishes who served one table each in succession, the services were very protracted; but as

there was a variety in the speakers, and each being on his mettle exerted himself to the utmost, the interest of the hearers did not flag. It was nothing unusual for the service to begin at eleven o'clock in the forenoon and not end till five or six o'clock in the afternoon.

In order that they might be like their neighbours the people of the Skerries, where I dispensed the communion once a year, wanted two tables, though the number of communicants scarcely amounted to fifty. I arranged matters so as to have only one table; but I daresay there were some grumblers at what would be called innovations. But I have heard of nothing equal to the amount of work performed within a limited period by the minister of Dunrossness in his annual visit to the Fair Isle, which forms part of his parish. Having gone into that island during the summer to visit and dispense the communion, a storm came on, which detained him there for about eight days. The weather also prevented the boats from going to the fishing. As the people had no pressing work to do at the time, and as it was only on rare occasions that they enjoyed the presence of the parish minister, they were anxious to avail themselves of his services while he was among them. Accordingly at their desire he preached every week-day during his stay. In all he preached thirteen times. He had taken the precaution of taking a good stock of sermons with him. Before this was exhausted the weather improved so that he was enabled to get home.

In ordinary circumstances the duty of attendance as a member of Assembly in Edinburgh is regarded by most ministers as a coveted privilege. Its occurrence serves as a holiday and an opportunity of meeting friends and class-

fellows after, it may be, an interval of many years. Yet a few choose rather to decline the opportunity and remain at home. I have heard of cases where ministers having once in a lifetime attended did not do so again for twenty years; but to a Shetland minister, going as a commissioner to the General Assembly, was an event of no small interest. An Orcadian minister told me, in speaking of this, that he hailed the occasion with the greatest pleasure. He said it rubbed off the rust which was so apt to gather about one's mind when removed from centres of mental activity and the converse of persons of education and intelligence, and that he felt the benefit of the change in health and spirits for months afterwards.

In former days, when the means of communication were more limited than now, the journeying of a Shetland minister to Edinburgh was a very serious undertaking. There was little direct intercourse with ports in Scotland. The chief trade was with the Continent. A vessel traded at regular seasons between Lerwick and Bergen, and there was also a good deal of trade between Shetland and Hamburg. Before Lerwick came into existence Scalloway was the chief seaport. A considerable trade was kept up between this place and Hamburg. Fish oil, dried fish, butter, wool, skins, and other articles were exported, and in return manufactured goods, cloth, wine, and groceries were received in return. As going to Bergen would have been of little service a passage was taken to Hamburg. If possible the minister sailed thence to Leith, but more frequently, as there was a far greater trade with London, he went there and thence found his way to Leith in time for the Assembly in May. He returned the way he came. In this manner a year

was often spent. It is natural to suppose that as his leaving was attended with solicitude and apprehension for his safety, for on such occasions he took an affectionate farewell of his flock, so his return would be accompanied with joy and rejoicing.

The hazard and uncertainty connected with travelling may be conceived from the adventures of a Lerwick tradesman. He had been in the extremity of the islands cleaning clocks, and his work done, was about to return home. He was no great pedestrian, being described as a weakly body. It was the season when the whalers were going north to Davis Straits. One of these being descried in the distance, it was suggested to him that as she was sure to call at Lerwick he should get on board and so save the fatigue of a long journey. He was accordingly put on board the vessel which was a London whaler. Taking it as a matter of course that she would call at Lerwick to make up her complement, he said nothing as to where he was going for some time. A gale sprang up so that the vessel was driven off the coast and bore away for the Straits. Here the unfortunate mechanic was duly initiated into the mysteries of whale-fishing, and indulged the hope that when summer was over he would get home. Fortune, however, owed him a grudge, for on returning from the fishing the Butt of Lewis was the first land made, and a safe and speedy passage home through the Pentland Firth was of more consequence than gratifying the most anxious desires of the passenger. He was carried to London where he spent the winter. Next spring he got a passage home, a travelled wonder, and all the rest of his life was an authority as regards the size and magnificence of the great metropolis.

CHAPTER IX.

Visit to Foulah—Dangers of passage—The landing—Interruption of communication in winter—Configuration of island—Circumstances of people—Climbing the Sneug—The Bouxie Fowling—View from top of the hill—Vast numbers of birds—Eagles in Foulah—Morning in July—The Schoolmaster of Foulah—The dog tax—Pauperism—Agility of Islanders—Population—Illegitimacy—Second ascent of Sneug—Rolling stones down hill.

BEING desirous of seeing as much of the country as possible, I made short excursions in summer in different directions. During one of these, when living with a friend in Walls, I had an opportunity of visiting the remote island of Foulah. This island lies out in the Atlantic, and is about sixteen miles distant from the nearest point of the mainland. It is secluded from the world more by the tempest-tossed seas which rise around than by distance. The party with which I went consisted of the Methodist minister and his lady, the doctor of the place also accompanied by his lady, and the inspector of poor. The doctor and the inspector went on official business—the former to see the sick, if there should be any, and vaccinate the infants; the latter to inquire into the condition of the poor. The voyage was accomplished under very favourable circumstances. Wind and tide were with us, and the sea unusually smooth. When the wind rises it is very different. In the calmest weather there is always broken water in places called strings or where rocks

approach the surface. There are several shoals around such as the Havre de Grind Rock and the Friars. Navigation is thus very dangerous without a pilot. So many shipwrecks have taken place near Foulah, that it is matter of surprise that there is not a single lighthouse on the west coast from Sumburgh Head to Flugga in Unst; yet there is not a winter during which one or more shipwrecks do not take place on the line I have indicated. When this occurs not a single individual lives to tell the tale. When a vessel strikes on the rocks during a storm a very few minutes are sufficient to break her up into fragments. The sad calamity is only known by pieces of wreck strewn along the shore.

Our passage occupied about four hours. The only landing place in the island is at the mouth of a small stream. This place is called Ham, and here we saw the fishing boats drawn up, and higher up on the right the proprietor's dwelling house. This, called the "Ha house," is occupied by him when he comes to the island for a day or two. Until lately such visits were of rare occurrence. Owing to necessary absence from the county, the proprietor, though warmly attached to his tenants, and universally beloved by them, was for a number of years unable to appear amongst them. When at length retirement from active service permitted him to reside at Melby, on another part of his property, on his visiting Foulah he was received with the most lively demonstrations of pleasure. Every one in the island assembled to meet him, and his short stay was held as a jubilee.

At other times the house and its adjuncts serve as a dwelling house, shop, curing premises, and store for the establishment of Garriock & Co. This firm have a shop

here, where goods are sold to the people, and their fish taken in on terms similar to those which exist elsewhere. It is but right to state that I heard of no complaints either as to the price or quality of the goods supplied at the shop; indeed, the firm carry on this branch of their business at great expense, and derive little profit from it. Some of our party were accommodated with lodgings at the shop, the others at the schoolmaster's. Though strangers were an unusual sight in Foulah, we found one already in the island, and next day a boat came in with one or two more. These, however, only stayed a couple of hours. The danger of making a lengthened stay, particularly in autumn, will be seen from the case of one who was a native, and came from Dundee, where he was residing, to visit his relatives. During this man's stay, which was in the end of harvest, the weather broke. When this occurs there is such a boiling surf round the island that no boat can live in it, and there is no getting out of the island or into it. He was kept a prisoner for five months and twenty days. During this unsually protracted break in the intercourse with the outer world, which lasted the whole winter and far into spring, the stores of food were almost consumed. To such straits were the inhabitants brought that they were about to have recourse to killing some of the cows, a thing which they would only have thought of doing when reduced to extremities. Fortunately, before things came to this pass, the weather improved so that they were enabled to get supplies from Walls. With our steamers and railways, and with telegraphs flashing, bringing news every morning from the most distant parts of the globe, we can hardly realize such a state of seclusion in any part

of Great Britain. Such, however, is the case ; not always for half a year, but often for months together. If any one wishes undisturbed retirement during the winter, he has only to go to Foulah, and there his desire will be gratified as much as if he was in a state prison in Russia, or in the centre of Africa. At a distance Foulah has a bold and rugged appearance. Its serrated outline reminds one of Arran, though its extent is much less, being not more than three miles in length and about two in breadth. The west side of the island consists of a range of five hills, the loftiest of which rises to the height of 1400 feet. These form an unbroken range of precipices, the highest gradually sloping to the north until it reaches the sea level.

The east side of the island is comparatively level and is the part inhabited. There are five hamlets or clusters of houses, which do not differ in appearance from those in other parts of Shetland. There are about 250 inhabitants. I was informed that they were in general living in comfort, and were by no means rack-rented. They had a good stocking of cattle and sheep. Though even in favourable seasons none of them could raise enough of corn to provide meal for their families during the year, yet with the sale of their surplus stock and the produce of the fishing, they could meet all demands on them. Agriculture in some seasons was a precarious source of subsistence. Sometimes when the crops were late, a gale of wind from the west, sweeping down in eddies from the hill side, would shake the standing corn, so that nothing but chaff and straw remained. But the sea around, however, abounds with fish, and the only want is boats of a

larger size to enable the people to prosecute their hazardous occupation in greater safety.

On landing, as my companions could not accompany me, I lost no time in setting out to climb to the top of the Sneug, as the highest hill is called. As the ascent is steep, I found climbing very tiresome. However, I gained the top, and found it covered with a long coarse kind of grass, where at this season skua gulls breed. These birds, called bouxics, lost no time in assailing me. I had no stick, and as they came rather close, and I could not find a stone to throw at them, their attacks were somewhat alarming. But they by degrees flew to a greater distance, and I was permitted to advance to the edge of the hill, where it terminates in a precipice, and at a safe distance from the brink contemplate the prospect around. I had almost forgot to say that on my way up I met two men returning from fowling. I was sorry that I had missed the opportunity of seeing them at their dangerous employment. On entering into conversation with them they readily explained the process. On the brink of the precipice a stake of wood is driven into the ground. To this a rope is fastened. This formerly was made of strips of cowhide twisted together with an outer covering of sheep-skin to preserve it from wearing in rubbing against the rocks. It lasted a long time and was a valuable possession. It was deemed of such value as to be often bequeathed as an heirloom, and was esteemed a sufficient dower for a bride. In this case it was a common hempen rope that had been used. In fowling one man remains at the top and slowly lowers the other who has the end of the rope securely fastened round his waist. He keeps hold of

the rope with one hand, and in the other has a stick with which he keeps himself off the projecting pieces of rock. When lowered to the desired place the man unfastens the rope from his waist and crawls about among the crevices and shelves of the rocks in search of nests. These are found in holes among the turf like rabbit-burrows. He now inserts the stick which he carried with him, and which has an iron hook at the end, into the holes and drags out the young birds. These resist desperately, and clinging to each other, the fowler often draws out a string of them. He immediately kills them. As he robs nest after nest he goes to the end of the rope with his booty and leaves them there until he has got as many as he wants. He then sends them up by the rope, and lastly fastening himself is pulled up by his companion. This pursuit is not so much followed after as it once was, as the people are in better circumstances than in olden times. The birds even when kept a few days before being eaten are of a rancid oily flavour, and have a coarse taste; besides this, the inhabitants are not reduced to such straits as when no meal was imported. At that time the severest pinch came before harvest. This was the season of the sea-fowl breeding, and the young afforded a welcome supply of food. The banks, as the precipices are called, were divided into certain portions among the various families, and no one trespassed on his neighbour's portion. If any one could not climb or did not choose to do so, he gave liberty to another to use his part of the banks, receiving part of the produce obtained as rent. Searching the cliffs was prosecuted so industriously that many met their deaths when engaged in this employment. Hence the

saying, "He gaed o'er the banks like his father and gutcher before him."

The view from the top of the hill on a clear day extends to a great distance. To the east Shetland is seen from Fitfell Head to the Skaw of Unst. Away to the south the distant summits of the Orkney Islands can be made out like specks of blue clouds. I have heard it said that on one occasion, under very favourable circumstances, the nearest of the Sutherland hills were distinctly perceived; and this was not by strangers, who might easily have been led into a mistake, but by Shetland gentlemen who, from their experience in travelling and knowledge of the locality, were not likely to be readily deceived by their impressions. But I could only say that I saw seven or eight of the hilltops of Orkney appearing as if among the clouds. To the west a vast expanse of ocean is seen. It is of a deep blue and there is a slight haze which appears to prevent one from gazing into the illimitable distance beyond. By crawling cautiously to the edge of the precipice you look straight down upon the sea, which breaks on the rocks 1200 feet below. Dropping a pebble you think it deflected on its downward course toward the land, but you lose sight of it before it falls into the water. The waves break, but you hear no sound, not even a murmur. But what strikes an observer with astonishment is the vast multitude of sea-fowl which abound. The air and cliffs are full of them. Some are darting out from their nests and others are returning. They skim over the sea high in air like swallows. On a much vaster scale the sight resembles the busy scene presented near a number of bee-hives, where some are hurrying out to

gather food and others are returning laden with spoil from the flowers of the field. The puffins or nories are most numerous in one place, the cormorants in another, while at the northern extremity of the precipices the kittywakes form a colony by themselves. While the puffins make their nests in holes, and the cormorant builds a nest on the rocks, the kittywakes lay only one egg, which rests on the bare shelves. This egg is short and thick, and thus rolls on its lesser axis when disturbed without being moved from its place on the shelf where it has been laid. It is only when the birds are suddenly alarmed that in taking wing they sometimes knock their eggs from their resting place into the sea. When disturbed the kittywakes rise like a white cloud and give forth a shrill clang which is almost deafening. Their alarm and noise continue until the intruders depart, when they slowly return to their temporary habitations. The sea around, which the birds traverse in all directions and to a great distance, abounds with fish, such as herring, cod, ling, tusk, haddock, halibut, skate, and conger eels. Some lobsters are caught, but from the incessant dashing of the waves the limpet is almost the only shell fish to be got in abundance. A pair of eagles until lately built their nest about 500 feet below the highest point of the precipice ; but owing to the destruction caused among the lambs by these birds, the people so persecuted them by incessant firing of guns during the commencement of the breeding season, that year after year the pair which frequented the island were driven away, and at last ceased to come back. I think this persecution a great mistake. No doubt it is provoking to have one's lambs carried away, but there is a greater pest here than even eagles, and this is from

the rabbits which abound. Not very long ago a pair of rabbits were let loose, and these have so multiplied that the clefts and crevices of the precipices swarm with them. They come out by night and even by day, and on the least alarm retire to their inaccessible fastnesses. The richest pasture is near their strongholds. This has been very much deteriorated by them, and consequently cannot carry so many sheep as before. Now if the eagles were protected they would keep down the rabbits. Always on the alert, and sailing round the cliffs in mid air, as I happened once to see one doing at Hoyhead, it is amusing to see the eagle swoop down with the greatest ease on an unsuspecting rabbit, and bear it away to a projecting pinnacle to pick its bones. For the destruction of this kind of vermin, a pair of eagles would be of more service than a hundred fowling pieces. The bouxies, which have their nests on the top of the hill, through the desire of egg collectors to possess specimens of their eggs, were lately almost extinct. They are found to breed only here and at Hermanness in Unst. Unwilling that they should disappear, the late proprietor of Melby gave strict orders that they should not be molested, and that no one should take away their eggs. The result of this prohibition was that they soon increased, and at the time of my visit were said to number eighteen pairs of adult birds. For the sake of those who may not have seen them, I may state that they are of a dusky brown plumage. They seem to be the connecting link between the falcon and gull tribe. They do not fish for themselves, but attacking the gulls which have made a capture, they cause them to disgorge the fish they have taken, and then with great rapidity

dart upon it and seize it before it reaches the surface of the water.

The view from the hill top was so grand, and possessed so much fascination, that I lingered long at the summit, and only descended to see about a lodging for the night. I had left this to be arranged for me by my companions. On my return to Ham in the evening, I found that the doctor had, along with the inspector of poor, been visiting the various hamlets. They had used all their powers of persuasion and authority to induce the mothers to allow their children to be vaccinated ; yet the work proceeded slowly. There was a great difficulty in overcoming the scruples which prevailed against vaccination. This is surprising, as no place suffered more than Foulah on one occasion from smallpox. At that time, out of about two hundred inhabitants, only three survived from the infection of this loathsome disease, called "the mortal pock."

My friend the Methodist minister could not well leave his lady. Strange to say, she had kept up during the passage across, and had only grown sick on landing ; but it was hoped that the minister and I would be able to explore the island next day. I was very hospitably and courteously entertained at the house of the schoolmaster. Mr. Cheyne was an Aberdonian. He had been in the Fair Isle before coming to Foulah. He did not rule with the same authority as Mr. Peterson in the Skerries. But circumstances were very different. In Skerries the whole population, with scarcely an exception, belonged to the Church of Scotland. In Foulah the adherents of the Church of Scotland, from causes which I cannot mention,

but certainly from no want of faithfulness on the part of those entrusted with ministerial supervision, were in a decided minority. The great bulk of the people professed to be Independents, and had a local preacher and chapel of their own. There were also some who adhered to the Free Church. Besides acting as schoolmaster, Mr. Cheyne officiated as catechist, and with the adherents of the Church of Scotland held divine service in the church of the island during the year, the minister of Walls visiting this part of his parish at intervals. In addition to the offices of teaching and catechist Mr. Cheyne also exercised the crafts of tailor and shoemaker during his hours of leisure. He also possessed a small flock of sheep, and went to sea as a fisherman occasionally. Owing to over-fatigue and the closeness of the bedroom, I did not sleep very well during the night, and as the morning advanced I was admonished of the approach of day by the loud crowing of a cock which must have been perched at no great distance. I therefore rose and went to take a walk before breakfast. It was a lovely morning in July. The sun had already risen several hours, and the air was quite warm. Not a breath of wind stirred — there was not a single cloud in the sky. Looking to the east the sea was smooth as glass, except where you could trace the currents, or where the water was breaking gently on the shore. The part of the mainland opposite was of a dark blue with a little mist clinging to the tops of some of the hills ; but it was especially delightful to breathe the air so fresh and balmy as it was. And then in the immediate neighbourhood there were the luxuriant crops of bear, oats, and potatoes, all in small plots, separated from each other by narrow

strips of grass. Here and there the banks of the small stream which ran down to the sea close by were enlivened by wild flowers, which in some places grew in great luxuriance and profusion. A narrow pathway led to the waste, and gradually disappeared among the bogs. Though trees were wanting they were not missed. Altogether it was one of the most delightful pictures of Arcadian beauty that I had ever witnessed. After going a little way up in the direction of the nearest hill I turned and went down to the sea-side, where I found the men moving about and engaged in one thing or another, fish-curing or going to sea.

Entering into conversation with an elderly man, I put some questions to him regarding the condition of the island and the circumstances of the people. He was very frank and open in his answers, and apparently had very little to complain of. One thing he did grumble at, and that was the poor rates. He inveighed against the luxury and extravagance of the paupers, and concluded by saying that nothing less would please them now than Scotch oatmeal. The oatmeal of the country is rather bitter in taste. Yet these paupers had a miserable allowance. They were ten in all, and the rate of aliment which they received was about half-a-crown a month. Some of them had a few sheep, which, the provisions of the poor law not being carried out to the letter, they were allowed to keep on the common pasture. One was said to possess no fewer than twenty-three. Then they had houses and gardens, could rear a few potatoes, and fish and fuel were both to be had in abundance. I was struck with the activity and elasticity with which I saw men of sixty and even seventy

years of age move about. It was so different from the step and gait of an old farm servant in the Lowlands; but this is easily accounted for. In the Lowlands hard work begins among the labouring classes at an early age. Young lads little past boyhood get the charge of a pair of horses. They are at work from morning till night, summer and winter, with little intermission. Sometimes this work is very severe. They wear heavy boots, and have their clothes sometimes soaked with rain. They are careless in changing these and catch rheumatism. The result is that they grow stiff and bent, and often break down at a comparatively early age.

If you are at a funeral in a Lowland country district, attended by people of this class advanced in years, ploughmen and crofters, as they wear holiday attire, you are struck with the way in which one shoulder is bent. The body seems in some degree twisted by continuous hard work. You will see very few perfectly straight and erect. This is so different from the ordinary Shetlanders, and the difference arises from the different modes of life. In Foulah the men are idle almost the whole winter. They go for the most part of the year barefooted or in rivelins. Their labour when at sea or on the land may be a severe strain for a time, but it is not long continued. The man with whom I entered into conversation was very anxious to know my opinion of his native isle. He was by no means deficient in the attachment which islanders bear to their place of birth, and seemed very much pleased to learn that I admired the place exceedingly, and would leave it with regret. He thereupon assured me that it was very healthy, and that if at any time he felt out of sorts or indisposed, he climbed to the top of the Sneug,

and that the grand view and the fresh air did him good for a month afterwards. While the men seemed strong, active and vigorous, they had a somewhat wild expression in their faces. This, unless it arose from imagination on my part, may be caused by their seclusion and mixing little with the world. They are passionately attached to their little island, and show no inclination to leave it. Of their fierce disposition in bygone days, stories are told by their neighbours on the mainland, to the effect that it was no uncommon thing to throw an enemy into the string or over the banks when they got a chance of doing so. All this is changed. It is said of them that last century it was the habit of their ancestors every Sunday, after divine service, to assemble for the purpose of putting the stone, wrestling, jumping, and other athletic exercises. But now in the religious life of the people of Foulah, no feature is more remarkable than their scrupulous observance of the Sabbath. It is further reported of them that a better set of people does not exist in the isles of Shetland. They are sober, industrious, intelligent, and very attentive to the ordinances of religion.

For some time the population of Foulah has remained almost stationary. At the time of my visit, out of the number of 250 inhabitants fifteen married couples had no children. Perhaps this arose from its being the custom rather than otherwise, for the young men to marry partners considerably older than themselves. There had been only one illegitimate birth during forty years. A singular custom still remains in regard to interments. Young children are buried in a part of the churchyard by themselves. It is likely that this practice has descended from pre-reformation times. At the time of my visit,

ecclesiastical and other matters were in a rather disturbed state. The congregational minister had set up an opposition school, and as he taught his pupils gratis, he was successful in emptying the school of his rival, who was unable to labour on the same terms. Ultimately Mr. Cheyne left the island, and on the mainland led an industrious and useful life as he had done formerly.

Besides the visits of the doctor for the purposes of vaccination, there was another official who was most unwelcome. This was the exciseman. He came not to look after smugglers, for this would have been useless. The people had forgotten the art even of brewing ale I suppose, though at one time they were like their neighbours, quite proficient in it. In the neighbouring isle of Papa Stour, which was fertile and produced good crops of bear, this grain was for the most part brewed into ale and drunk by the brewers of it. There was some smuggling of tobacco and spirits from Dutch busses, but it would have required a very careful and extended search to have discovered where contraband goods were stowed away. The exciseman came to impose and collect the tax on dogs. This was a most unpopular tax, and proved very hard on the dogs. When the exciseman, or dogman as he was called, was announced as coming on his odious errand, a general massacre of the dogs ensued. By various deaths, some by hanging, some by drowning, the canine race so long flourishing was almost exterminated.

On my return from my morning walk I found an excellent breakfast waiting. I need not dwell on the details of this, one of the most important events of every-day life, but simply say it comprised variety and abundance. Having partaken of this repast, I found

on inquiry that my friend, the Methodist minister, was now ready to set out to view the scenery of the island, and in particular to make the ascent of the hill. Such was the fascination of the prospect which I had enjoyed the previous afternoon, that, in spite of the steep climb and the consequent fatigue, I resolved to accompany him. The doctor and the inspector were still too much engrossed with business to think of going with us. In due time we gained the top of the highest hill, and having feasted our eyes sufficiently on the wide and varied scene, went to the next hill, which lay a little to the south of this. The west side of this second hill, though covered with green sward, was very steep, almost like the roof of a house. As we climbed, from time to time we set some of the stones rolling which lay in the way, and as we momentarily rested ourselves, watched their headlong progress, as acquiring impetus and velocity, they leaped and bounded into the air, and so reached the bottom, where they were splintered into fragments like the bursting of a shell. We continued this amusement until we reached the summit, and there laid hold on all the stones we could find and sent them rolling to the bottom. Our last performance threatened to end disastrously. With our united strength we got a stone resembling in shape a millstone set on edge, and were about to send it off when, as I was leaning forward, I felt that I had lost my balance and could not recover myself. If I had fallen on the stone I would have been entangled with it and been either crushed by its weight as it rolled over or had one of my limbs broken. So to avoid this I sprang over it as boys do at leap frog, and landing before it, wheeled to the side in a curve of five or six yards, while

the stone went rolling past. My companion was more alarmed than myself. He said he had never during his life got such a shock. For me I had no time to think of the danger; but I remember the thought flashing through my mind at the instant how ill it would look if reported in the newspapers, that I had met a fatal or serious accident in this way. Our amusement was now at an end and we returned to our friends. As the time of their leaving was still uncertain, and it so happened that another boat had come from the mainland and was on the point of going back, I embraced the unexpected opportunity of going with them.

CHAPTER X.

Warrister House—Supply of peats, water, groceries, meat—The shop—Expenses of living—The Glebe—A Minister Farming—Amusements—Gardening—The Minister at Football—What to Cultivate—Growth of trees—Improvement of country by plantations in other places.

At other times I had the pleasure of seeing interesting parts of the country, such as Dunrossness, Sandness, and Northmavine. But these have been sufficiently described by tourists, and it is out of my way to say anything about them. I was also in Unst, an island rendered classic by the talented family of the Edmonstones. With its varied scenery of hills and precipices, its firths and wicks, its sounds and goes, the history and traditions of its inhabitants, their employments and amusements, Unst forms a tempting and attractive subject on which to write; but its varied features and productions, its fauna and flora, the habits and customs of its people in ancient and modern times, have at different times been described in a happy and pleasing manner by the family I have mentioned and those intimately related to them.

Let me return to home affairs. In Shetland as in other places, the home life of the minister has its pleasures and troubles, its comforts and inconveniences. By law parish ministers are provided with commodious dwellings by the heritors. This is not the case with regard to *quoad sacra* parishes. Here the want has to be supplied by voluntary

effort. In my case a manse had been provided partly by the liberality of the proprietor, and partly by the exertions of my predecessor. It had been originally the dwelling of a proprietor who held part of the island, and was consequently called Marrister House, after the name of the small property. It had been a long narrow house of three stories high, a style of building common a hundred years ago. When this property was sold, and the whole island came into the possession of one owner, the mansion house was let to two or three families. When a missionary was settled in Whalsay, it was set apart as a dwelling for him. Being considered out of keeping with his moderate income, and as part of it was not in good repair, the roof was taken off and a storey taken from the height. Besides being lessened in height, it was also shortened, by taking down a gable and part of the walls and then rebuilding the gable, so as to be in keeping with the diminished height. This served for a time. But when Whalsay was endowed as a parish, the minister, trusting to the liberality which had been shown in providing a handsome endowment, resolved to have a manse in keeping with the altered circumstances of the living. He accordingly enlarged the already existing manse at a cost of about a thousand pounds. It was scarcely completed and taken possession of when he died. At our entry, it had been nearly a year uninhabited, and what with the new building and damp climate it was for a time a very cold abode. Most of the chimney-vents smoked at times—one or two did so persistently. From damp, draughts and smoke, we for a while suffered a mild form of martyrdom ; but as with constant fires the partitions and walls dried by degrees, and by various

remedial measures we learned to abate or cure the smoke, the house became a more comfortable residence. Fuel in the shape of peats was abundant and close at hand. In one fireplace a quantity of peats was heaped up which lasted all night, so that the fire did not go out by night any more than by day. Our water supply nearly all the year was from a cistern in the house which was filled by the rain which fell on the slates of the roof. As there was no dust or soot to contaminate it, we felt no harm from constantly using it. In an exceptionally dry summer spring water had to be brought from a great distance. There was no well near from want of springs, and as the ground was rocky a hole could not be dug in which to have a pump. There was running water not far off, but it was not fit for drinking or even cooking with. Being strongly impregnated with peat, it was better suited for tanning leather than for domestic purposes.

There was one shop on the island. Though this was a monopoly we had no reason to complain,—the supplies were generally excellent, and the prices as moderate as could be expected. But to those who had to come to the shop from a distance of three or four miles there was reason for complaining. The sea might be rough and impracticable for boats, and walking across the moors carrying a burden was very fatiguing. Of course the people were accustomed to it, but it was a great waste of time. It must have been a grievance even to them to have to wait for the convenience of the shopmen, when perhaps on a rainy day the shop was shut at meal-time, and the customers had to stand without until the shop was re-opened. The people, however, were not hindered in this island from buying goods in Lerwick if they chose.

They were only bound to deliver their fish to the company at the current price ; and as this was one of the terms of agreement by which the crofts were held, no fault could be found with the bargain being fulfilled. As many articles required for consumption in a household had to be bought in Lerwick or fetched from the south, it was necessary to lay in a store for the winter. Fresh meat could only be procured part of the year. In the end of summer lambs could be got. They were small, but very delicate and well flavoured. Being not much larger than a well-grown hare, they cost from half-a-crown upwards. In the end of the season, about Martinmas, beef was plentiful while it could keep. Families killed at this time a fat cow or more. Part was eaten fresh, part was made into sausages or ham, the rest was salted. Fresh fish could be got almost every day of the year. In stormy weather sillocks were caught in abundance close to the shore. Then there were fowls and eggs. The current prices for fowls was sixpence each, but they were small, and exceedingly dry and tough in the eating. We got fish at the shop whenever we wanted them. The extraordinary development of the herring fishing, and the increased traffic with the south, has of late quite changed the state of affairs. To supply with provisions the thousands added to the ordinary population during the fishing season, vastly increased supplies of all kinds are brought by steamers. These come and go almost daily. There is thus no want of fresh meat in Lerwick at all times. Eggs have become so scarce that hundreds of dozens have to be imported every week. As far as food is concerned, everything can be as readily procured as in Aberdeen or Leith, but by carriage raised a

little higher in price; it is therefore a great mistake to suppose that the expense of living is less here than in the south. Groceries and other goods imported must be at least the cost of carriage higher in price.

We kept one cow, which gave us excellent milk during the greater part of the year. More than one could not be maintained on the glebe; for the piece of land called by courtesy the glebe was only a bit of rough pasture enclosed from the common. It was exceedingly worthless, and would have taken a small fortune to improve and cultivate. My predecessor had expended at least a hundred and fifty pounds in enclosing it with drystone dykes and in building a house upon it, fitted in one end for servants' accommodation and in the other as a byre; but except that the glebe afforded grazing for one cow the money was thrown away. I tried to raise some oats and potatoes on part of it the first year of my occupation, but the expense of cultivation was great and the return next to nothing. I therefore adopted the system which in these times seems to be attended with less loss, and which suits a lazy farmer—I let it all go into grass, and bought food for the cow during winter. I venture to recommend this mode of farming to ministers in similar circumstances. We kept some fowls at the outhouse on the glebe; but as their abode was cold, and they were not so well attended to as if they were near the manse, the glebe being nearly a quarter of a mile distant, they never laid eggs in winter and very sparingly in summer. It was, however, a pleasure to see them when taking a walk in their direction, though they were far inferior to the kinds of poultry said in books to lay twenty dozen in the year.

My glebe was of little value. It is otherwise in the case

of original parishes. When there is a glebe consisting of eight or ten acres of good land, with the right of pasture to the extent of carrying a hundred sheep, this is of great importance, as affording abundance of home supplies without the trouble of sending to a distance for what is needed ; and in a remote locality, with no society to mix with on terms of intimacy, a moderate attention to farming and gardening is to a minister a healthy and agreeable relaxation from the midst of more serious employment. No doubt there is a danger that a minister may be too much taken up with the cares of farming, and that, engrossed with thoughts of cultivating his fields, he may neglect the field to which he has been specially called to devote his most serious thoughts. But this may be said of any relaxation. The only out-door amusements besides farming to a limited extent which are popularly regarded as decorous in a clergyman, and consistent with the sacred profession, are gardening and fishing. To go over the country, either on moor or field, in the garb of a sportsman, would shock the feelings of many Presbyterians, and would not tend to raise the minister who should do so in the estimation of his flock.

As tastes are said to differ, so the standard of what is right or wrong for a minister to do varies in different places. In England it is by no means unusual, I believe, for a clergyman to play at cricket or even at football along with a village club ; and in many parts of Scotland the minister of a parish acts as skip at a curling match. But in Scotland, as a general rule, the line would be drawn so as to exclude cricket and football. Some indeed—I do not know if they would be called muscular christians—hold that it would be a good thing if ministers

mixed more with their people in field sports than they do, and that their presence would have a softening and refining influence. I remember hearing a discussion on this subject in the General Assembly. A well-known and eminent elder, a professor in one of our universities, was dilating on the advantages which would result from ministers taking part in the games and recreations of their young people. He brought forward as an illustration, and in support of his views, the example of a popular minister who, he said, not content with distinction at home, had crossed the borders, and at the head of a party of parishioners in a game of football, had vanquished the southerners on their own ground. An old minister who was sitting beside me, and who happened to come from the neighbourhood spoken of, shook his head at all this. Whispering to me, he said, "And what do you think the young rascals who were at football used to say when the minister was among them." Professing my ignorance, he enlightened me by saying, the word passed round was "Trip up the parson."

It is otherwise with the pursuits I have mentioned. As to gardening, it is engaged in under difficulties where the climate is very damp and where there is very little sunshine; yet with good soil many vegetables attain perfection even in Shetland. And it may be a consolation to know that those which are really most useful, can be reared in abundance and without extraordinary effort. In regard to fruit, such as even apples, there is no use in contending with the sea breeze and a cold climate. I have, indeed, seen apple trees trained on a south wall with fruit growing on them; but the apples were small and sour, and though looked on with wonder by those who had

seen no better, were apt to raise melancholy thoughts in the minds of those who had been accustomed to see the greengage or the Ribston pippin when well-ripened in a favourable season in a more southerly latitude. Currants, both black and red, are cultivated with greater success, but even these do not produce very abundant crops. Strawberries are the only fruit which, so far as I am aware, can be raised in abundance in the open air. I have seen excellent crops of these, remarkable not so much for size as for the excellence of their flavour. As to gooseberries, they do not succeed so well as currants. They have difficulty in forming wood ; and to stand the exposure to the winds, they need to be left unpruned like a bush of rushes. In such circumstances much fruit cannot be looked for. Such vegetables as potatoes, turnips, cabbages, carrots, parsnips, radishes, lettuces, and the like thrive remarkably well. Splendid crops of turnips are reared on some farms when due attention is paid to their cultivation. The climate is temperate and the growth is not checked by frosts, so that the bulbs grow until Christmas. Cabbage plants of a coarse kind, which sometimes grow to an immense size, are reared in the country by the natives in a small enclosure called a plantacruive. But now it is easy to get plants of all kinds fresh from Aberdeen by the steamer ; and cauliflower, celery, leeks, and such things as require early planting, can easily be got by post from earlier and warmer climates. Rhubarb seems a favourite dish, and grows in great abundance in every well-kept garden throughout the country. As to flowers, some perennials thrive exceedingly well. Annuals are very generally sown, and make a gay appearance in autumn. When to this a greenhouse is added, such

plants as geraniums, fuchsias, cinerarias, and many others, with the additional warmth and shelter afforded, can be reared in spite of the deficiency of sunshine, and the superabundance of moisture in the air. But too much is not to be expected. Potatoes, except in some favoured localities, are apt to be soft and watery. I have seen pods of peas fairly well filled, but it was in a good exposure.

When I went to the country I took with me a small stock of good tulips. These I planted at the proper time, but the following summer only a few green leaves came up—there were no flowers. It was different with crocuses. These made a brilliant display in successive years, and formed fair sized bulbs. At the best, however, the cultivation of flowers and fruit is attended with great difficulties. There is a constant struggle against adverse influences. These are, as I have already mentioned, the prevalence of high winds and the want of sufficiently high temperature and of sunshine. As an indication of the uncongenial climate and of the difficulties which accompany gardening, I may mention that I saw in a manse garden a plant of the common whin. It was no doubt an exotic and was carefully tended as a rarity. But from year to year it maintained a precarious struggle for existence. It never flowered. The shoots which grew in the summer were next spring blasted by the wind, so that the plant made little advance in size. As a protection the elder and willow were in most gardens planted beside the wall to assist in breaking the wind; but they added little to the shelter. If planted in the garden, they grew until they reached the height of the wall, then the shoots which grew higher than the wall invariably perished the following season, and

the trees were like a hedge closely trimmed by a pair of shears.

At Scalloway, Weisdale, Busta, and Unst, are to be seen the best grown specimens of trees, but they are little better than shrubs, and present the appearance of having cowered under the shelter of the stone walls to escape the fury of the tempests. As may be supposed there is not much shelter for birds, which elsewhere build their nests in trees. These have to seek shelter among the rocks by the sea-side. Whenever they have a chance of building in trees they are not slow to avail themselves of it. In Unst a number of feathered songsters built their nests in the grounds at Buness. In the manse garden at Sandsting I saw an elder tree which had by its size attracted the notice of a pair of hooded crows which, though the tree, or rather the bush, was in close proximity to the dwelling, had built a nest in it. These must have been in great straits as they are very shy in nesting near a house. It is different with magpies, for I remember hearing of a couple of these birds building their nest in a gooseberry bush in an exposed part of the country in Banffshire near the public road between Banff and Huntly.

As to the question whether forest trees would grow in Shetland under any circumstances, so as to attain the dimensions which would render them valuable as timber, the experiment has never been tried on a sufficiently extended scale. It has been said by those who assert the affirmative that forests of pine and fir exist in Norway in a higher latitude, and that therefore there is no reason why trees of the same kind should not grow as well in Shetland. Others again say that the circumstances are

different, that in one case you have the wind blowing from the sea only at times, whereas in the other case, from whatever quarter the wind blows, it is always off the sea. It seems to me that planting trees in Shetland has never had a fair trial. To give them a chance of succeeding, an extensive plantation would need to be fenced with high feal dykes. This would, to a certain extent, protect the plants. Then, if the plantation was on a large scale, though the outsides might suffer, the blasting of the trees would not extend to the inner part. It would need to be formed where the subsoil was open. Where the rock came close to the surface or where the soil consisted of peat moss, experiments in planting would simply mean money thrown away. The absence, save in one or two isolated places, of trees indigenous to the soil is to be accounted for by the ground, except in the most rugged places, being pastured over by horses, sheep, and cattle. These, reduced to great straits in the winter, are ready to devour every green thing. In the Skerries and other places, willows grow best close to the ground, so as almost to escape notice, being cropped as close as the heath and grass. Planting, however, is a landed proprietor's question, and when one sees the extensive tracts which lie waste and unproductive in Scotland, through the want either of energy or capital, or both, there is not much use in speculating as to whether arboriculture is profitable or even practicable in Shetland. In a country where pasture is extremely valuable, perhaps uncultivated land is better used for feeding cattle than for growing trees.

Speaking of Scotland, though in many districts large tracts are under plantations of larch and fir, which have proved a source of wealth to the families to whom they

belong, and a great benefit to the whole country, much yet remains to be done. At least as large an extent remains bare and unproductive, except for heath and ling, which might with great profit and advantage be enclosed and planted with forest trees. A prospect which is bleak, cheerless, and uninteresting, is by thriving plantations changed as by magic. It is only those who have lived in a district naked and bare, and after leaving it for ten or twenty years have on their return found it covered with wood, who can realize the immense improvement effected in the amenity of the country. For instance, in Caithness, both on the north at Sandside and on the east near Berriedale, the contrast between the bare moors and the parts of the district which have been planted with trees is something astonishing. I was very much struck with the change which has of late been produced in that part of Sutherland which lies between the Meikle and Little Ferries. Great part of this, embraced within the parish of Dornoch, has within the last thirty years been planted with trees. These have grown rapidly, and besides clothing the nakedness of the land, have given promise of speedily yielding a return for the outlay incurred. It would be well that this example were followed elsewhere. Of course when the pasturage is of more value than wood might be expected to turn out, such places as are best fitted for grazing might be spared, and the plantations made, enclosed with wire fencing to keep out the sheep.

In Sutherland, the chief proprietor, with well-meant efforts for improvement, and with prince-like liberality, has expended an immense sum in bringing land under the plough. This has been a failure. If the same sum had been laid out in planting wood throughout the county

of Sutherland, and in breaking up into moderate holdings those overgrown farms to be found here and there on its east coast, it would not only have been remunerative for the landlord himself but beneficial for the tenantry. It is to be expected that with the low prices of grain, the expense of keeping inferior soil in good heart, and the expense of labour, much of the land which in prosperous times has been brought into cultivation will be again allowed to run out of cultivation. Certainly much of it would be better planted with larch and fir.

In regard to planting in general, as this is a matter of national importance, it might well be undertaken by the State where proprietors neglect their duty and are either poor or improvident. It would surely be better for the country to have vast tracts suitable for growing trees planted than use them only for rearing grouse or deer. In ordinary circumstances, not to speak of the shelter afforded by thriving belts of wood, planting on a large scale soon brings in a return for the expense. The trees in a few years grow large enough to be thinned out for pit props. Then paling, fencing posts, and firewood fall to be disposed of year by year, until in the course of time, under proper management, the trees become matured for cutting down. There is also employment to wood-cutters, sawyers, and carters in the district, and on a large scale for shipping to convey the timber to a distance. When the advantages which attend the proper management of forests is duly considered, there seems to be a strong reason why the improvement of waste lands by planting, in those cases where landlords are unable or unwilling to enter upon the work, should be performed by the State. In Shetland, considering the demand for pasturage by croft-

ers and the unpromising field for trying experiments in the way of planting, it is unlikely that the services of the State will ever be called into requisition.

CHAPTER XI.

Boating—Depopulation of small islands—Solitary life—Employments of family in winter evenings—Fishing for piltocks—Sea trout—A sweep net—Magnus Mouatt.

LEAVING gardening and planting of trees, let me now say a word or two regarding a recreation delightful to the islander and those from infancy dwelling on the sea shore. This is boating. On a larger scale all the inhabitants of Great Britain are islanders, and it is often remarked with surprise that at a distance from the sea in the inland districts, boys take kindly to the water. There is no district where, if there is a sheet of water adapted for the purpose, they will not take to sailing boats. But in the islander pure and simple, boating is a passion which he is ready to gratify at all times when safety and leisure permit.

In former days a well-manned sixern was the conveyance of a Shetland country gentleman. The boat was his carriage and the crew his retinue. With his boat he could go on a visit to a neighbour, and when he chose to stay a few days from home, his men enjoyed themselves in their own way as much as he did, and were ready to return at a moment's notice. At no very remote period the landed gentry lived, with rare exceptions, on their estates. They kept up intercourse in a friendly way by meeting as often as possible at each other's houses. A visit would last a week or longer, during which time there

was no lack of amusement. In this way they lived without feeling the need, which some of our landed proprietors seem to feel, of going to London for the season, deeming those wretched and out of the world who choose to stay at home and there fulfil the duties of their station. Even when there is no imperative necessity for having a boat, every family near the sea who can afford to bear the expense, has a pleasure-boat. But it is chiefly in the summer that boating is resorted to as a means of recreation ; and then in the long days or quiet evenings it is delightful. The very idea that you can go from one part of the country to another, or visit the islands which in many places fringe the coast, and which without a boat would be inaccessible, is in itself agreeable. Many of the smaller islands are now destitute of human inhabitants. They are tenanted only by sheep or cattle. On some the pasture is good, but this is only where you see marks of former cultivation. The homestead is easily recognised in the heap of stones and growth of nettles. Then there are the plots around covered with grass of the brightest green. These form a striking contrast to the surrounding waste. It is such spots that the sheep chiefly resort to, so that the green herbage is cropped close to the very roots as fast as it grows. The turf dyke which formed the fence and boundary between cultivation and the wilderness is only perceptible in a slight ridge which scarcely rises above the level of the rest of the ground. One of these islands, Linga, was right in front of the manse, divided from it by a narrow sound. In surveying such scenes, one's mind is apt to revert to the time when, instead of being abandoned to solitude and desolation, they were peopled and cultivated. We picture to our-

selves the houses and fences in good repair, the fields in crop, the families moving out and in to their dwellings, going to their occupations by land or sea, according to the season ; and the feelings which are raised are somewhat tinged with melancholy. We are apt to think that the returns from sheep can hardly make up in a national point of view, for the want of hardy fishermen who were reared in these places. The life led by families who had an island to themselves, must have been dreary enough during the long winter. In summer they had work sufficient to prevent them from feeling the time heavy on their hands, and at the fishing, and indeed, while the long days lasted, they had easy and frequent intercourse with neighbours. But during the long winter nights it was far different. With the wind blowing a gale, the rain descending in torrents, and the spray and foam carried to the door or borne over their roof, at night it was impossible to stir to even a short distance. Sitting round the fireside they could hear during lulls in the storm and tempest, the loud breaking of waves on the shore, as they employed their leisure in various useful occupations. Yet we can conceive their lives not devoid of happiness. There was no lack of fire. Abundance of fuel had been provided during summer. They had light from lamps, in which fish oil was burnt, and of this there was no want. The crops of corn, and it may be, a little meadow hay had been secured, and were close at hand protected from cattle and the elements. If their dwelling was humble it was warm, and if low in the roof it presented an easier surface for the tempest to slide over. Their occupation, their temperate lives tended to promote health, and enabled

them to enjoy with relish, the plain and simple fare on which they subsisted.

During the hours of daylight there was employment of different kinds. The corn had to be threshed and winnowed. This they dried on a small kiln, and ground in a hand mill. The cattle required care and attention. In the forenoon, if the weather permitted, they were driven out to water, or to the hillside to pick up a little coarse grass to eke out the scanty supply of straw. The sheep were also looked after at times, and when there was snow on the ground for a day or two, an exceedingly rare occurrence however, and the ponies came to the houses, they got a handful of straw. During calm weather fish was caught close to the shore from the rocks, or at a short distance from land; and thus the short winter days passed by swiftly until spring returned. In the evenings the female part of the household were employed in carding and spinning wool, in sewing and knitting, and the ordinary labours of a household. The gudeman and lads made baskets of different kinds; those of straw were called keyshies, smaller ones were made of stalks of the dock plant instead of willows. These were called budies. Articles of dress, or implements of fishing or husbandry, were made or repaired.

A Shetland man formerly was Jack of all trades, being by turns farmer, fisherman, mason, carpenter, shoemaker, tailor, and boatbuilder. Nothing seemed to come amiss to him; so true is the proverb that necessity is the mother of invention. Some indeed, who had a natural aptitude for one craft rather than another, such as shoemaking, tailoring, or weaving, were employed by others

in the branch in which they excelled, but this was in seasons of leisure, and was subsidiary to the main business, fishing. In a word, there were few things required in a household which were not made at home; and often great neatness and ingenuity were displayed in their handiwork.

While picturing in imagination the heaps of ruins restored, the fields now lying waste again cultivated, and the families dead or dispersed living and moving in their former abodes, one cannot help feeling regret at the blank which has been made in too many instances. Nowhere in Shetland or Orkney do you find single families, living in such circumstances as I have described. These islands are now solitary. This may have arisen in some cases from the inconveniences attending island life. But in the great majority of cases the hardy fisherman and his family have been removed to make way for sheep. Landlords have considered it more profitable to rear domestic cattle than to tolerate the existence of human beings. Without adopting revolutionary or socialistic ideas, which would be ruinous and subversive of prosperity to a country, it can easily be seen that the rights of property may be pushed to extremes. A law which provides that in the case of crofters, a fair rent may be fixed by an impartial tribunal, and that the tenant shall not be removed at the whim or caprice of the landlord, either for the purposes of gain or sport, is an exception to the general laws of political economy, which may not only be tolerated, but hailed with satisfaction as merciful to the tenant and beneficial to the State.

By means of a boat one can not only go from place to place or visit at pleasure objects of interest in the

small islands otherwise inaccessible, but the pastime of fishing can be indulged in. Of course this is to be understood as being engaged in during summer. At certain times, if one wishes for numbers, sillocks can be got in abundance from the shore. With a rod and line, furnished with five or six pins dressed with white feather, you will secure three or four at every cast ; but the very abundance of the fish and the ease with which they are caught soon disgusts you. There is no excitement or hazard in the pursuit, and after a few trials you desist. But the capture of piltocks or mackerel is a different affair. I can only speak of taking the former. This is done in the fine summer evenings just at sun-down. I may here explain that this fishing is called the *eela*, a term retained from the Norse, as distinguished from the *haaf* fishing. Piltocks are immature saithe, after they have passed the stage in which they are called sillocks. They are nearly the size of a herring, and when fresh and properly cooked, are delicious eating either at supper or breakfast. With potatoes they are commonly used by the natives at supper. And I suppose the lateness of supper among them may be accounted for by the fact that it is only after the return from the fishing that the materials for this meal can be had. In fishing for piltocks several rods are put out from the stern of the boat which is rowed slowly along. Sometimes the hooks are baited with limpets, at other times the fly is used. In taking the bait piltocks are very cautious. At times they will hardly bite at all, and you have to come home with half-a-dozen. Again they will swallow the hook as fast as it is presented to them. No sooner is the line thrown into the water than the bended rod and taut line show that a fish is on, and every one is

busy hauling in the rods, disentangling the fish, which are brought on board struggling and splashing. A splendid haul is thus sometimes made in a very short time. It is thus a scene of great excitement when you come across a shoal in the mood for taking; but it is just as the sun sets that they are taken, so that when darkness sets in the sport has to be abandoned. It is not like fishing for salmon in a river, where you will see the patient angler plying his vocation for hours together, without being rewarded by a single rise. Here the affair lasts only about an hour, whether your fishing is a success or a total blank. While piltock fishing is the recreation and employment of the many, the capture of sea-trout is the more highly esteemed pursuit of the skilful angler. Sea-trout ascend almost every stream in the country to spawn. Though the streams are small, and run only a short course to the sea, they are generally connected with fresh-water lochs. The fish remain at the mouths of the streams in the sea and ascend to these lochs to spawn. They generally ascend in autumn when the brooks are swollen with rains. But they are to be had all the year round in the sea near the shore. In many spots a hang net used to be set and only removed for repair. This was examined from time to time, and the fish taken out if any were entangled.

With the rod the best fishing is to be got, not in the fresh water lochs or running streams, which indeed are often little larger than ditches, but in the sea itself, at the mouths of the fresh water. In such places there are often deep pools left by the receding tide. In these the fish lie, and in such places takes have been made which seem fabulous. I have heard of half a hundred weight of sea trout or even more taken in an hour or two. I myself, by

sheer accident, once had what I consider a wonderful take. This was in the parish of Walls. There is here a stream called the Brouster, which runs a course of half a dozen miles through a chain of lochs, and terminates in something like an estuary on a small scale. This estuary is quite salt. At the east end of it is a large pool, so deep that even at low water a vessel of some size could float in it. At ebb tide it is almost cut off from the sea, leaving at one place a shallow which can be crossed over. Well, I set out one morning to fish without any fixed idea where to begin except that I would try the Brouster. The public road crosses the stream near the sea, and when I reached this place by the road, as the tide was out, I thought of taking a cast in the salt water. I had on two flies. No sooner had the line touched the water than both hooks were seized, and two sea trout were fast. One immediately broke off, and the other ran off with the line for a considerable distance, and then when I began to tighten the line the fish sprang repeatedly into the air in the liveliest manner imaginable ; but as the tackle was good the fish gradually became exhausted, and I wound up the reel until coming near the side, when I was able to secure a beautiful trout of nearly three pounds weight. As this was my first capture of any magnitude, I was in a state of considerable excitement. I lost no time in making another cast, with the same success as before ; in short, in little more than a couple of hours, and it seemed to me an affair of five minutes, so absorbed was I, no fewer than eleven sea trout between two and three pounds each lay on the gravel behind me. How long my success would have continued, but for an unfortunate incident, I cannot tell. But it was interrupted in this way. About five or

six yards from the shore a tuft of sea weed floated to the surface from the rock beneath on which it grew. The last trout which I caught was being gradually brought to land when the line got entangled with this bit of sea weed. I tried to extricate it, but to no purpose. I could not wade in, as the water was of unknown depth. I was unwilling to break the line, so I stripped off my clothes, and swimming out disengaged the line, and at the same time secured the fish, which having been exhausted before made little resistance. Dressing as hastily as I could, I resumed the fishing, but did not get a single bite again. So I prepared to leave in great spirits at the unexpected success which I had met with.

How to carry the fish was now the difficulty, for I had two miles to walk before I could reach home. I however got assistance, and from no less a person than the proprietor of the ground adjacent, Captain Moatt, better known as Mansie Mouatt. This was an old gentleman who after many years spent in the service of the Aberdeen Lime Company, had bought a piece of ground with the view of spending the remainder of his days in the land of his birth. His estate was not large. It consisted of a couple of crofts and a piece of the adjoining moorland. He had built a dwelling house and a small steading on one of the crofts, and had let the other. As his property was bounded on one side by the inlet of the sea which I have already spoken of, he considered that his rights as proprietor extended to the fishing. But as he had not a grant from the crown giving him exclusive rights to salmon fishing, and as there was no word of a Fishery Board at the time, he did not seek to insist on his rights or try to exclude trespassers. He was delighted with my

success, as promising himself a rich harvest in the future ; for he had observed by their leaping that there was abundance of trout in the place, and knowing how salmon were caught in the Dee, from having resided long in Aberdeen, he had been preparing a sweep-net to try and catch some for himself. With his assistance I got my fish home, and was with a relative of my own invited by him to assist the next day in making a trial of the net, which he was to have finished by that time. Accordingly about mid-day we met at the place appointed. He had already tried to catch the trout, fishing with fly from a boat as for piltocks, but to no purpose. He thought that they could be "drawn" like piltocks, and had no idea of giving them line to play them. As soon as they had taken his flies they immediately broke off, and now his hopes were placed in the net. All things being ready, the net, which was of considerable length, loaded with sinkers of lead at the bottom, and having floats of cork to keep it upright in the water, being in the boat, one end was fixed to the shore. Then our friend rowed out, letting the net gradually sink into the water, and enclosing a large circuit before coming in with the other end. We now began to haul in both ends of the net, all the while in great suspense. We knew that there was no lack of fish in the water. But if the bottom was uneven, or if a rock cropped up from below, the net might be entangled or torn, and all the labour would have been expended in vain. With great delight we saw the net come in smoothly and easily. As it came nearer, the disturbance and splashing in its bight showed that it was not empty. The commotion became more violent as we made haste to haul it out of the water and on the beach.

There were no fewer than twenty beautiful trout, all shining like silver, and none less than two pounds weight. We made one or two more trials, at each time with success, and then desisted, thinking that we had enough.

Mansie was in ecstasies, thinking he had made a discovery which added much to the value of the property. But he was too far from a market, for having afterwards, on getting a large haul, sent a woman to Lerwick with a burden of trout, to sell them, they had to be disposed of for a trifle, and he did not repeat the venture. He found that the people of Lerwick had fish enough at home, and that sending even sea trout there was like sending coals to Newcastle.

The fame of the Brouster as a fishing stream somehow became noised abroad. It was, I think, through a notice in a sporting publication. As it was free to all, and there were no restrictions, a good many came to fish in it. Comfortable lodgings were to be had near. I heard of one party who camped in a tent. If any were unsuccessful in catching trout, they were at least able to enjoy a change of air and diet. Among those who assisted in giving celebrity to the Brouster was the late Dr. Guthrie, who for some time, accompanied by one of his sons, lived in the neighbourhood and had considerable success in fishing in the streams and lochs of Walls. In the course of time, Mansie became disgusted with the life of a farmer and proprietor. He sold his land and went back to Aberdeen. After he left, by the incessant use of the net and rod fishing, in season and out of season, the fish became sadly diminished in numbers and size, so that the last time I tried angling in the place formerly so abundant, I, after considerable labour, got only one, and

that by no means a heavy fish. In all parts of the islands excellent angling is to be had at the proper season. Now that communication with the south is so easy, Shetland presents a good prospect to the angler who knows where to go, and who will be at the trouble to apply to the proprietor of the land for leave to ply the gentle art. The establishment of a Fishery Board will help to prevent the extermination of trout, by rendering illegal the capture of spawning fish.

CHAPTER XII.

The Noup of Noss—Farm House at Noss—Farming—Loss of Cattle—Pony Farm—Improvement in Fishings—Benefits from Extension of Fishings—Land Tenure—Emigration.

In connection with boating, picnics are in great favour, especially in Lerwick. Here, though there are no wooded vales or long glens with winding streams, there are charming spots which are easily accessible by boats. And on a fine summer day nothing is more delightful than, after visiting objects of interest or admiring the scenery, to sit down with a pleasant company to lunch in some sequestered nook among rocks by the shores of the tranquil sea. I have pleasant recollections of several at which I was present. One of these took place when I was staying with a friend at Lerwick. We crossed by boat to Bressay, and thence walked across to the Sound of Noss. This is a narrow strait through which the tide flows backward and forward with great rapidity. When being ferried over, it was difficult to imagine that we were not crossing a river, as the direction of the Sound is winding and it is narrow. But a look at the bottom, where in the clear water you see the sea-weeds rooted and kept stretched out by the current, reminds you without employing the sense of taste that you are on the salt sea. On the island of Noss at the time I speak of there was one farmhouse and steading. This was at the south-east

corner of the island. To a considerable extent, near the house, the land was cultivated in south country fashion. Part of the stock consisted of about a dozen very fine polled Aberdeenshire cows. This was before these animals brought such high prices as they have done of late. It was in July, and the crops gave promise of an abundant return. One field of grass I had never seen equalled. It seemed to consist entirely of clover and was rank and thick. Around and beyond the arable part of the farm the pasture stretched away to the precipices in the north and west. Passing the farmhouse, at which, however, we were to call on our return, we saw numerous traces of former cultivation on the east side. Gradually ascending we came opposite the well-known Holm of Noss. This is a precipitous rock close by, rising to the height of 300 feet. The means of crossing over had been removed, and we could only at a short distance look at the flocks of birds which tenanted the place. I need not repeat the well-known story of how a Foulah man, tempted by the reward of a cow, climbed to the top of this previously inaccessible holm, and having established communication and earned his reward, in returning by the way he came, lost his footing and was drowned.

Climbing to the Noup of Noss we enjoyed a magnificent view of the east coast of Shetland, and after feasting our eyes sufficiently, returned to the farmhouse which we had passed on our way. We were received with the greatest cordiality by the farmer, an Aberdeenshire man, and found a sumptuous feast awaiting us. Though it is by no means an uncommon thing to find in detail, in works of fiction and real life, descriptions of the good things enjoyed at feasts by hungry people, and though this

is a very tempting and attractive subject, I shall not attempt to set forth a Barmecide feast, but simply say that both the welcome and the viands were unexceptionable. Our host did not complain of solitude. He had his farm to look after, and this kept him sufficiently occupied; and when he had occasion to go to Lerwick on business, the distance was not great, and could be accomplished except in extremely stormy weather. But though the rent was moderate the profits were not great. He complained of loss of stock, especially ponies, in spring. At this season grass is very scarce, and the pasture being bare, the cattle are enticed to go into dangerous places at the tops of precipices in quest of a bite, and being unable to turn back fall down and are killed. In this way loss was sustained every year. Then, markets were far off, and the expense of freights made a considerable reduction on the prices obtained for produce of every kind. Since that time, however, the most dangerous places have been fenced by stone dykes, and the loss resulting from cattle falling over precipices has been reduced to a minimum. Of late years the whole island of Noss has been turned into a pony farm, and is in the possession of the Marquis of Londonderry. Here the ponies, reared in a regular and systematic way, are drafted off for sale, or to the coal mines at Seaham; and in this instance we find the human population removed to make way for the inferior animals. But a short time brings about many changes. Until recently proprietors in many places seemed anxious to get rid of the people. Rates were increasing in an alarming way. Sheep farming was very profitable. So it seemed that it was for the interest of landowners to send away the people and have the inferior animals in

their stead. But two if not three unexpected causes have arisen to prevent the depopulation of Shetland. Sheep-farming is by no means so profitable as it was, the fishings have increased to an unlooked for extent, and the tendency of legislation is to give the crofter a hold in the country whence he cannot easily be dislodged.

Until lately the chief fishing was for cod, ling, and tusk. This was prosecuted by native boats of limited capacity, and in a storm by no means safe. The takes at the end of a long season were small, in comparison with those made by Scotch fishermen in large and well appointed boats. At the end of the haaf fishing, if a crew caught a hundred or a hundred and fifty weight or cwt., it was esteemed a good fishing. Now Scotch boats have brought in at one haul, six or seven tons of cod and ling. And boats from the Moray Firth have brought back in the end of March, after an absence of two months, from fifteen to twenty tons of dried fish. The appearance of Scotch fishermen on the Shetland coast has created quite a revolution in fishing. Not only have they conferred a vast benefit on the country by the wealth they have brought ashore, and the trade and employment they have thus created, but their example has been imitated by their Shetland brethren. These have bought large boats, and following improved methods of fishing, have been as successful as the strangers. The same results have followed in the herring fishing. This at one time had been very prosperous, but notwithstanding the presence of Dutch vessels year after year, the herring fishing in Shetland had dwindled into insignificance, and was only tried on a small scale after the haaf. Now, a thousand boats from various quarters bring in 200,000 crans of

herrings in a single season. It may readily be conceived what an amount of employment this gives rise to. Curing stations and piers have to be provided, houses for coopers and gutters have to be erected, provisions of all kinds have to be imported. A large amount of shipping is employed in bringing salt and barrels, and then carrying away the herrings when cured to different ports in the Baltic. Landlords have shared in the general prosperity which has followed the altered state of affairs. They have reaped a rich harvest in letting building stances and ground for the prosecution of the fishing. The fishermen are better able to pay their land rents than they were formerly. Every kind of farm produce is in great demand. Merchants have had their business greatly increased, and the demand for workpeople has been largely in excess of the supply. In short, a vast amount of wealth has been brought into the country; and while all classes have got a share, the landlords have profited to a very considerable extent. They have thus come to see that depopulation and eviction may be carried too far, and that men may be a greater source of wealth than sheep or cattle. It would seem then to be clearly for the advantage of all parties that the population of the country, consisting as it chiefly does of fishermen, should be increased and not diminished.

Another point of view from which the matter may be looked at is, that in driving fishermen to emigrate we are sending away the defenders of the country. These islands have at all times been a nursery for sailors. The whale and seal fishings, the coasting and foreign trade, and the Royal Navy, have at all times employed large numbers of those who first went to sea as fishermen. Not to speak

of those elsewhere in the Naval Reserve, and available in time of need to man our ships of war, nearly a thousand are in regular training at present at Lerwick. Besides these there is a large number who have passed through the period of training, and who could, in the case of an emergency, be depended on to assist in manning our ships of war. Before national interests of such great importance the selfish considerations of one or two individuals should give way; the land should not be possessed on principles which would permit its being held for purposes of simply securing the highest rent. It is pleasant, however, to reflect that security of land tenure, if given by law, will be accompanied, if not previously procured, by the general prosperity of the country. Every opportunity should be given of settling down in crofts in those place from which the people were formerly evicted. And over the country there is abundance of such places, as may easily be seen by any one who passes through it and sees the dales and glens occupied only by sheep, which formerly maintained a large population.

A question has been debated as to whether or not it would be better to have two distinct classes—farmers and fishermen. It has been said that a man whose attention is distracted between fishing and farming, cannot succeed in either occupation; and it is pointed out that the fishermen in Scotland who used to farm bits of land have ceased to do so, and devote themselves entirely to fishing. This is a matter which may be left to the people themselves. Their comfort and the health of their families is promoted by having one or two cows to give them milk, so this cannot be got without crofts. It is almost as necessary to have some sheep. In the variable and damp

climate warm underclothing is necessary. If they had sheep of their own, as formerly, along with a croft, there would be some employment provided for the men in times when the weather prevented them from going to sea. And there would also be useful employment in the winter evenings for the female part of the household in spinning and knitting. In any case divorcing the people from the soil should be gradual and should come of itself. On the whole, economic causes have stopped the tide of emigration from Shetland, and now that, with the extension of the suffrage, the crofters have awoke to the consciousness of power, there does not seem at present any likelihood of the country being further depopulated. My visit to Noss, as well as what I have seen in different parts of the country, impressed very strongly on my mind a sense of the loss inflicted on the country by wholesale emigration, especially in districts where fishing could be successfully prosecuted.

Parting from our kind host at Noss farm, we were ferried across the sound, and crossing Bressay the way we set out in the morning, reached Lerwick in the evening.

CHAPTER XIII.

Griefskerry—Haaf fishing—Return to station—Fish curing—Dinner at the Lodge—Fishermen on the Moray Firth—Singular dream—Jumpie and Costie—Return to Symbister.

ONE more picnic I may refer to as giving one an opportunity of relating how the haaf fishing was conducted under the old system. The factor with a party was about to pay an annual visit to one of the fishing stations on the east of Whalsay. This was on one of the small islands which lie a few miles out in the North Sea. Being asked to join the party, I willingly consented. The day was fine and we had a commodious boat to sail in. In an hour or two we reached the group of small islands called Griefskerry. Here we landed, and having secured the boat, made our way to one of the huts called lodges, where the fishermen live when on shore. It was the day when the boats came in from the fishing, and a busy scene presented itself. The place was full of bustle and activity. Some boats had arrived. Part of the crews were busy landing the fish and getting them weighed. Others were variously engaged in making preparations for cooking a hot meal before snatching a few hours' sleep. The lodges in which they lived were built of stones and turf, and thatched with feals and straw. Each of them was divided into two compartments by a row of stones. The inner part was covered by a layer of straw, and formed the

sleeping place. The outer part, which served as the kitchen, had seats of stone round the fireplace. There was no chimney except a hole in the roof, and there was no window. But after being forty hours at sea without a wink of sleep, and with hard work all that time, I have no doubt the food and rest at the lodge were enjoyed with a zest unknown in the luxury of a palace.

The haaf fishing was formerly prosecuted from the time the crops were laid down in spring until nearly harvest. Until lately this was the principal fishing in Shetland. But owing to the small size of the boats and the insufficient appliances for fishing, even when fairly successful, the returns to each man were but comparatively trifling. However, a great change has taken place in Shetland within a few years, and with large boats the fishings are prosecuted with as great success as elsewhere. At the time I speak of, and from time immemorial the haaf fishing was the chief industry in Shetland.

The fish most valued for curing were ling, cod and tusk. After these were salted and dried they were exported, chiefly to the Spanish market. From the excellent quality of the fish and the care bestowed in drying them, those caught on the coast of Shetland have long commanded a high price. Much of what is sold in this country under the name of Shetland fish is what has been caught at the Faroes, and even on the Norway coast. This is darker in the colour and is of inferior quality. During the haaf fishing the men are absent from their homes from Monday to Saturday. On setting out on Monday their first care is to provide bait. This consists of piltocks. These are got in the evening. They are caught from a small boat near the shore with fly or

limpets as bait. Having got bait they set sail and go eastward in the direction of Norway until they lose sight of land. They now set some lines baited with piltocks, and with what they catch on these they bait their great lines, and continue fishing until Wednesday night, when they make for the land. Reaching their station on Thursday morning they discharge what they have caught, take some rest and refreshment, and then return to the fishing ground. They all make for home on Saturday, taking for their families fish not cured, such as herrings and halibut. During the week, though engaged in severe and exhausting labour, sometimes rowing for five or six hours together and with very little sleep, their food consists of the plainest fare. When at sea oat cakes and sour whey are their only sustenance. They fare rather better when on shore. On reaching their lodges in the middle of the week one acts as cook. Their common food is potatoes and fish; so the cook makes ready a fire, washes and pares the potatoes and puts them on the fire. He then takes one or two of the last caught fish, ling or tusk, and after cleaning them boils them in salt water. He also, in a separate vessel, boils some fresh livers. Then when the potatoes are mashed, oil from the livers is poured over them instead of melted butter. The meal is now ready. The rest of the crew, who had been engaged in delivering the fish, cleaning the boat, and bringing lines ashore to make ready for next voyage, make their toilette before partaking of food. They roll up their sleeves as far as they can, wash their hands and arms in the sea, and are now eager to set to. There are no spoons or forks, and therefore they make use of their hands, dipping them into the pots of potatoes and fish by turns. After this food is

partaken of, they sleep for a few hours, and then make haste to resume their toil.

The haaf fishing is at the present day prosecuted under circumstances of greater comfort than formerly. Larger boats are employed, and improved modes of fishing have been introduced. Part at least of the boats being decked, a sleep can be enjoyed when there is time for it. Stoves afford means of preparing coffee or anything warm. Wheaten bread, ham, bacon and beef are used. People will in the course of time forget the hardships which their forefathers endured. Things were very much the same in the Moray Firth not very long ago as they were ten years ago in Shetland. In my younger days I had frequent opportunities of learning the conditions under which the fishermen in the Moray Firth used to pursue their hazardous vocation. Living at the seaside and teaching the young of the sea-faring population, one came to be acquainted with their ways. In various parishes on the sea coast fishermen form a part of the kirk-session. Not to speak of other times, these in particular I used to meet at communion seasons in the manse on Muckle Monday, and they were remarkable for shrewdness and intelligence. It was wonderful to see with what propriety they conducted themselves in society to which they were not every day accustomed. Two of these elders, dead many years ago, John Cowie (Dowie), and James Flett (Yankee), I well remember as the best specimens of their class, decent, honest and exemplary in their lives, truly pious without ostentation. One of them, John Cowie (Dowie), told me that in his young days they went to sea with no food but some oatcake and cold kale for "kitchie;" their

drink was cold water. This was all they had in an open boat during even the cold nights of winter, when, after shooting their lines, they had to wait some time by them before hauling, and then come home in the morning. Now, however, fishermen seem to have gone into the opposite extreme. The butcher, the baker, the grocer, and the confectioner are all needed to furnish supplies for the fisherman's kit of necessaries and even delicacies. It is indeed alleged that luxuries find their way into the fisherman's commissariat which would be deemed extravagant even for ladies to indulge in. One of the elders whom I have mentioned, John Cowie (Dowie), told me of a hairbreadth escape which he had from being drowned, and attributed his deliverance to a remarkable dream which he had. Being at sea one night in the Moray Firth, after setting their lines all had gone to sleep. The look-out had also gone to sleep, probably thinking that there was no danger. All of a sudden, in the midst of a dream in which he conceived himself as about to be overwhelmed by a vessel, he awoke, and looking up in the dim light between him and a clear sky he saw the bowsprit of a schooner which had just struck their boat. He caught hold of a rope which was hanging from the bowsprit, and as he did so the vessel went with a crash over the boat, which sank, carrying his companions to the bottom. Not one of them escaped. He himself clinging to the rope made his way on board, and was landed at the nearest port, whence he made his way home. I suppose he had never heard of Lord Brougham's theory of dreams.

In the parish to which I have referred there were two fishermen who officiated together as precentors. These were familiarly known by their tee names, "Jumpie" and

"Costie." Though more remarkable for the strength and heartiness of their singing than for the artistic sweetness of their notes, for many years they gave entire satisfaction to a large congregation composed chiefly of their seafaring brethren. At sacramental seasons they were to be seen and heard at their best. Their whole soul was engaged in their delightful task, and as they sung "St. Paul," "Martyrdom," or some other favourite tune, as if by sympathy, the whole congregation was roused and carried in excitement along with them. There was no need of organ or harmonium to fill up what might be lacking in the volume of sound. I wonder if now there are any "Jumpies" or "Costies," or if the race of old precentors has died out and been succeeded by more refined and pretentious leaders of sacred song. Peace to the memory of the departed worthies. They served their day and generation with credit and usefulness, and this is all their successors can aspire to. There may nowadays be more refinement and cultivation in singing—there cannot be more heartiness and fervour.

But we have wandered far from the haaf fishing. It is now prosecuted under greatly altered circumstances. Scotch boats fish on the coast of Shetland nearly all the year round, and the native fishermen are doing their best, and with a creditable amount of success, to equal them in the returns which are made.

Leaving Griefskerry we visited some caves in the south end of Whalsay. We found them at this season the abode of the cormorant and wild pigeon. Numbers of these flew out as we entered, but some of these cormorants, seated so high up as to be out of our reach, remained on their nests, and were not easily dislodged. Though clumsy on

land and flying through the air, the cormorant is singularly active and graceful on the water, where they swim and dive with the greatest ease and rapidity. As they sat on their nests with outstretched necks we could see the glossy lustre of their dark green plumage and their bright eyes as they looked angry at being disturbed. Having secured a few of their eggs, we left them to recover from their fright, and resume the task of incubation.

We landed at the pier of Symbister after a day spent with pleasure by all concerned. The factor was pleased to see the fishing prosecuted with success, as there was thus the prospect of well paid rents and accounts at the shop. The fishermen were glad to see the representative of the landlord who, with his usual liberality, did not visit them empty handed. Some bottles which were conveyed in a hamper disappeared during the afternoon, and as none of our party partook of their contents, I have reason to believe that they found their way to the hands of the fishermen, and were by them used in drinking health to their masters, and continued prosperity to the fishing. As for the rest of us, we had spent a day long to be remembered, and had visited places hitherto unseen by us, and not likely to be revisited.

CHAPTER XIV.

Writing Sermons—The Minister as a Doctor—Belief in efficacy of drugs—Dr. Hamilton, Minister of Bressay—Diseases—Rheumatism—Mitigation of Poverty—A Native Doctor—Winter—Stormy weather—Irregularity of Mails—Jus devolutum.

WHILE the life of the Shetland minister is diversified to some small extent by relaxations such as I have mentioned, his chief employment is work connected with his office. He has a sermon to prepare every week, and also a commentary on a portion of Scripture ; and if any one thinks that in this out of the way part of the world any slipshod preparation will do, he is very much mistaken. If a minister wishes to gain the attention of his hearers, and preach up to their standard of intelligence, he will need to study. The Shetlanders claim to be as good judges of sermons as of tea. Having been a good time a probationer I had about fifty discourses to start my ministry with ; but being afraid of reducing my stock too much, and so being from hand to mouth, I used my old sermons very sparingly, and kept writing new ones, so that when at the end of three years I left I had several remaining which I had not drawn upon. The composition of sermons thus occupied a good deal of time. Then there was reading. In addition to my own books I had access to the library at the mansion house, which contained a large number of excellent works in various de-

partments of literature. In this way even the long hours of winter passed away very pleasantly and swiftly. Except in summer there were few or no visitors. In most localities the parishioners are of humble rank, and thus there is no time spent in complying with the demands on a minister's time which are apt to be made when the members of his church are higher in the social scale. He meets with his flock during the week when visiting the aged, the sick and infirm, and during the work of catechising; and all this in addition to other parochial work keeps him busy enough. He is also expected to act as a doctor. This arises from the difficulty of obtaining the services of a regularly qualified medical practitioner. At one time a doctor could scarcely be got outside of Lerwick, and sending to this place for medical help was a costly affair, and not to be obtained in a moment at any price; so by force of circumstances ministers are obliged to keep some simple medicines and give the best advice their experience can suggest when in cases of emergency they are applied to. In the course of time, from learning what are the prevailing complaints and ailments the minister is able, by prescribing simple medicines, to do as much good as is often done in more favoured districts by the exhibition of nostrums in the hands of the licensed sons of Esculapius. Shetlanders have great faith in drugs. Individuals have been known to take three different prescriptions for the same illness from different persons in one day. To my surprise I learned that some who were in extreme poverty and had hardly enough of food to eat were in the habit of sending south for Holloway's pills and other patent medicines. I heard of some who were so fond of medicine as to be a source of annoyance. One of the most famous

ministers in Shetland for medical skill was the late Dr. Hamilton, minister of Bressay. Patients from far and near came to ask his advice. By his own people he was often applied to, and sometimes when there was little the matter, as alleged illness was a grand excuse for coming to the manse when something more than drugs was looked for. Dr. Hamilton, however, had attended all the medical classes up to graduation before being licensed as a minister, and had therefore more claims to be considered skilful in the art of healing than most ministers. He was telling a friend one day that he was pestered by a woman, a parishioner of his own, for drugs, and that her appetite for them seemed insatiable. By his friend's advice he made up a nauseous mixture of aloes and other bitter ingredients, and directed her to a prescribed quantity of it three times a day. For a fortnight he saw no more of her, until being in Lerwick one day, he saw her in the distance turning round the corner of a house. It was a new thing for her to try and get out of the minister's sight. She was generally ready on seeing him to come forward with the greatest alacrity and give him a long statement regarding her health. So he called after her, and told her to stop. On hearing him she did so. He then asked her how she was, and if the mixture was nearly done. She assured him that she was much better, that it was a powerful medicine ; but that it was not quite done, and that if she needed more she would call upon him for it. He was not troubled, however, for a long time for any more medicine by her.

The chief diseases are rheumatism and derangement of the stomach, which is often weakened by the nature of the food. Rheumatism is induced by the damp and va-

riable climate. The houses, when a good fire is kept burning, from want of proper ventilation, are heated like an oven ; and clothes hung up to dry make it like a vapour bath. Then when people sit in wet clothes by the fire and go out again to the cold atmosphere, a repetition of this is sure sooner or later to cause rheumatism, which in many cases becomes chronic, and is attended with severe pain. Diseases of the stomach seem to be caused by the nature of the diet. Sour curds and sour fish are much used as articles of food. A common drink consists of bland or whey, as sour and harsh as vinegar, which is constantly drunk, and cannot fail to be injurious. Tea is also drank to excess. This is boiled until every particle of colouring matter is extracted, and literally nothing but leaves remain. But on the whole, from their simple and temperate lives and freedom from excesses, the Shetlanders are a healthy and long-lived race. Instances of extreme longevity are common. My services as a doctor were not much called into requisition. I had a formidable rival as a practitioner in one of my elders, whose fame was already established. People when ill came to the manse rather for a little wine or some delicacy which it was imagined would "better" an ailing person, to use the expression commonly employed in reference to this. And here the want of a resident proprietor is especially felt. The poor, the sick and infirm have their wants and diseases very much mitigated by the presence amongst them of those to whom as landlords they look up as superiors. To suppose that a landlord or his family could relieve all the cases of poverty, sickness or distress which prevail is out of the question, but they can do much, if so inclined, to soothe and comfort those who are suffering from sickness

and bearing the infirmities of old age. I have often been pained at the sight of distress which I could not relieve, and have often wished that in the island there was a resident landlord, of whose household it could be said "I was sick and ye visited me."

The elder to whom I have referred was justly held in high repute for his medical skill. One might be in doubts how far medicine contributed to restoration to health, when in addition you had rest from work, fresh air, and nourishing food; but when it came to reducing a dislocation or putting a fractured limb in splints, and when a perfect cure was the result, then by the success which followed Thomas Henderson's operations there certainly was good ground for the reputation which he enjoyed. In cases of extreme gravity a doctor was sent for to Lerwick, or if the patient could bear removal, he was conveyed thither in a boat without delay.

In winter we were very much secluded from the world. The day then was short, and the weather often such that one could not venture out of doors. As there were no roads we could not even go to the shop or post-office after dark; if you did so it was with great risk. It was like going among those dangerous quags and pits which Bunyan speaks of in his "Pilgrim's Progress;" and in the case of the younger Shetlanders there was the additional danger apprehended from the "trows," or fairies. A belief in the existence of these was universal, at least among the young. Such was the terror which this belief inspired that the youngsters feared to go alone outside the door after dark. Even grown up people carried a lighted peat in a pair of tongs, as much to keep the diminutive but powerful race at a distance, as instead of a lantern to show the

road. The knolls and green spots where they held their midnight revels were well known. Stories of those spirited away by them into fairy land formed part of the tales rehearsed by the fireside in the winter evenings.

Close confinement in the house during winter, sometimes in a smoky atmosphere, is supposed by some to have imparted a swarthy colour to the complexions of the clergy who had been long resident. A south country minister once told me that in the General Assembly the Shetland ministers were conspicuous for the darkness of their complexions, and that he attributed it to sitting so much in the house during the long and dreary hours of winter.

As might have been expected, owing to the prevalence of storms, communication was very much interrupted during winter. The Leith and Aberdeen steamer, which carried the weekly mail, was sometimes delayed a day or two, and in rare cases even a week beyond the regular time. Then though the mail had reached Lerwick in good time, it had to be carried a long way by land, and then across a wide arm of the sea, to reach us. The consequence was that we were sometimes a fortnight without a mail from Aberdeen. It was most tantalising, especially when news of any importance, either public or private, was expected, to know that the post had arrived on the opposite side of the sound, and that our own boatmen could not dare to cross until the sea fell; and as the pleasures of life are said to depend much on small things, it was with no ordinary feelings of delight that we saw the small mail boat with its white sail, glide out from Symbister Bay, when the storm had ceased and the rapid tides had run off the heavy waves. If it happened to be evening, and it generally was so, when the mail came, it was very agreeable,

after a fortnight's want of news, to throw aside everything else for letters and newspapers. The letters of course were read first, then the choicest parts of the newspapers or magazines were looked at. After this steady reading followed till one or two in the morning, so as to get posted up in current affairs and topics of general interest at home and abroad. Yet we had nothing to complain of in comparison with the times when the mail was brought from Aberdeen by a sailing vessel, or at a period more remote when, at irregular intervals, letters were sent from Leith as an opportunity presented itself. The story is well known of a stranger who had newly arrived in Shetland going to church and hearing the minister pray for the deceased sovereign, King Jamie, though the reigning sovereign had succeeded to the throne several months before. But this was nothing compared to the disappointment of a presentee to a parish who arrived to find that he was too late by a few days. He had been duly presented by the patron to the parish of Bressay. According to law, if the right of patronage is not exercised within six months, the presbytery, in virtue of the *jus devolutum*, make the appointment. This had been done by the Presbytery of Lerwick, as the presentee did not make his appearance in due time ; and so he had to return home without being minister of Bressay.

CHAPTER XV.

Sabbath Schools—Intelligence of People—Church Attendance in Winter—Endowment of Whalsay—Hardships of Ministers—Crossing Hill of Sandness—Districts to be Endowed—Longevity of Clergy.

It is usual for every minister to take an active interest in Sabbath School teaching. He generally finds assistants among teachers, elders, or young men or women connected with his congregation. It is a great defect in many of our country parishes that there is no place for teaching a Sabbath School in except the church. This may be suitable enough in summer, but it is out of the question in winter. In addition to the Sabbath School taught in the church, there were other two, one of them taught, when there was a schoolmaster in the island, by him, the other was taught by the catechist. I got other two opened when there was a considerable population resident, and in this way there was a satisfactory provision for Sabbath School teaching. These I visited by turns; but it was only in fine weather that one could do so.

I was fortunate in finding, among the elders and others, willing assistants in every good work. One of them, highly esteemed by the community for his exemplary life and unobtrusive piety, was catechist in the district in which he lived, and taught a Sabbath School in his house. Another, whose name I have already mentioned as pos-

sessed of medical skill, taught a class in the church along with myself after divine service. Like many others of my congregation he had been a sailor, and had seen a good deal of the world. It was indeed surprising to find in an out-of-the-way place men who had been at Greenland and Davis Straits, various ports in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Some had been at the diggings in California, Australia, and New Zealand, and yet had returned to what at best was a life of hardship, to earn their bread in a stormy sea and under inclement skies.

A gentleman travelling on the mainland was surprised, as he passed a man breaking stones at the roadside, to hear himself addressed, "How are you, Mr. ——, I never expected to see you here." On being asked, "How do you know my name?" the answer was, "When I was a policeman in Glasgow I saw you regularly going to your office and at once recognized you." And to show the diversity of employments to which Shetlanders turn themselves, a near neighbour of mine told me that when in the south he had wrought in a coal pit near Dalkeith for seven months. This statement accounted for the fact that he was the possessor of the only wheelbarrow which I had seen used by the natives.

When one understands that many had seen a good deal of the world, that they were naturally intelligent and very fond of reading, it may be easily understood that I had an appreciative not to say critical audience. In winter, from bad weather there was occasionally no service in church. This is not to be wondered at when you reflect, that when a gale of unusual violence came on accompanied with rain, you could scarcely keep your feet

or make head against it, and in a few minutes one gets drenched to the skin.

On a stormy day during my first winter in the island I went to church and found that my congregation was to consist of two individuals. These were near neighbours, who, on seeing me set out, had followed me for fear I might come by some harm. I need not say that I did not preach, for my clothes were soaked with the rain which was running down from my neck to my heels, and I was only too glad to get home without delay. Indeed, preaching in winter is attended with great difficulty and hardship. If you have a road and the church is near the manse, the inconvenience is not felt, only that the congregation is limited in numbers; but the church and manse in Shetland are sometimes two or three miles apart, and in many cases there is no road.

The country for a few weeks in summer is dry, so that you can walk with comfort; but during the greater part of the year the ground is like a sponge. When there is a footpath it is in one place worn into a quagmire and in another, close by the seaside, it leads among rough boulders where there is danger of stumbling. Then there was the unpleasant feeling both for minister and congregation of sitting in wet clothes. It has been said that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. This is true of a minister's life in most parishes in Shetland. His brethren in the south have little idea of the fatigue and labour caused by long journeys in severe weather. In towns the churches are best attended in winter,—it is otherwise in the country. To give some idea of the fatigue frequently endured I shall only mention two cases. When the present minister of Nesting was settled

he had to preach in turn at Nesting, Lunnasting, and Whalsay. In going to Whalsay he had to cross a dangerous sound three or four miles broad, with strong tides running, and where even a moderate wind blowing in a direction contrary to the tide raised a heavy sea. By the erection of Whalsay into a parish he was relieved of this duty. As part of his parish he still retains the district of Lunnasting. This is ordinarily supplied by a missionary. But when a vacancy occurs at the mission station, and this has sometimes lasted six months, it is the duty of the parish minister to preach at Lunnasting as well as at home. He had his choice of crossing an arm of the sea called Douro Voe, about four miles broad, and then walking through pathless bogs for about other four miles, or of going all the way by land round the head of Douro Voe. If he went the latter way, before reaching the public road he had to walk for about five miles over ground toilsome in the finest weather. It was climbing up a succession of hillocks and then descending, jumping from one peat bank to another, so that, keeping a bee line, it was like performing a series of gymnastic exercises until *terra firma* was reached. It may be conceived what the state of things was when in winter the ground was very soft, and one or two burns had to be crossed. Yet one of the parishioners at Lunnasting, in sympathy with his minister, told me that Mr. Levie had rarely failed to come on foot all the way and return home the same evening during winter.

On the west side of Shetland the present minister of Walls in Orkney for six years acted as missionary at Sandness and Papa, being at the same time parish schoolmaster of Walls in Shetland. During this time, after

teaching during the week, he every Sabbath, except in rare cases, crossed the dreary waste between Voe in Walls and Sandness. Every alternate Sabbath he crossed the Sound of Papa and preached there. He invariably returned home the same day. What is implied in this may be gathered from an article on Shetland in *Good Words*, written by Dr. Kerr. Her Majesty's Inspector was going, I presume, to examine the school at Sandness. He had been staying overnight at the manse of Watsness, about midway on the seaside between Voe and Sandness along with clerical friends. "Next day," he says, "being Sunday, my clerical friends were to preach at Sandness. The distance is called six miles, but it can be reached only by crossing mountains, and there is no road. Three of us, all ignorant of the road, proposed to walk, and the servant girl was sent with us as a guide for a short distance. She told us we had a hill to cross, and on coming to an elevation well worthy of the name, we asked if this was the hill. 'Ah no,' she replied, 'that's just a brae.' We came to the hill at last, and a hill it certainly is, about 800 feet high. Till lately, the minister of Walls required to cross this every alternate Sunday, summer and winter, in the discharge of his duty. This, coupled with his duty in Papa Stour, an island separated from the mainland by a dangerous firth, and an occasional visit to Foulah, gave us some idea of the hard work of a Shetland minister." Yet the missionary for six years performed a longer journey over these hills every Sabbath with rare exceptions. But it was not to the minister alone, but to the people, that great hardship and inconvenience was caused by distance from the place of worship, and especially at communion seasons. There might not be a single dwelling-house be-

side the church, and in the vicinity only a few scattered here and there. Consequently in stormy or rainy weather, these, as well as barns and outhouses, were crowded to excess. To the old and infirm it was a great source of discomfort to cross the sea in boats, and then, it may be, to be detained a day or two by stress of weather. This has been in a great measure remedied by the erection in several districts of quoad sacra parishes, and a liberal appointment of mission stations. Sandwick and Quarff were formerly Parliamentary churches. The parishes up to this time erected have been North Yell, Whalsay, and Burravoe. However, much remains to be done. Such districts, both as regards size and population, as Lunnasting, Weisdale, Whiteness, Sandness, Aishsting, Olnafirth, and others, would form admirable parishes. I cannot conceive a greater benefit which a millionaire could confer on these districts than by giving part of his wealth to erect them into parishes with an adequate endowment. And it would be well if such endowments were on a scale equal to the stipends of the original parishes. In each case the same duties would have to be performed ; and to live in a way becoming a clergyman would require at least as great an income. And this is not saying much. With the exception of three parishes—Unst, Tingwall, and Dunrossness—the stipends of the other parishes amount, on an average, to only about one hundred and fifty pounds each.

Notwithstanding exposure to severe weather, and their at times enduring excessive fatigue, ministers in Shetland have usually attained a good old age. Without going far back, several could be mentioned whose longevity might almost be called patriarchal. The Rev. Dr. Ingram, Unst,

died a few years ago at the age of 103 years. When an hundred years of age he was able to take part in a religious service by giving an address. His son, who is his successor, and is now about eighty, performs with regularity the duties of the ministry. He was ordained in 1830. The Rev. Mr. Turnbull, minister of Tingwall, Mr. Barclay, minister of Mid Yell, and Mr. Nicol, minister of Walls, died aged about 90 years each a few years ago. All of these enjoyed good health until nearly the time of their death. Dr. Craig, minister of Sandwick, and Mr. Webster, minister of Quarff and Burra, are alive, and are about ninety. The former married when about eighty, and has a son. He was ordained in 1832, and until lately discharged all the duties of the ministry without an assistant.

CHAPTER XVI.

Origin of inhabitants—Traditions—Mixed races—Peculiarity of names—Land tenure—Scotch adventurers—Claim to live in the island—Eviction—Adventure of an elder at the diggings—Right of pasture on Scattald—Truck.

HAVING said so much in connection with what may be considered strictly relating to ministerial life, I may now say something regarding things in general which came under my notice.

As regards the inhabitants, it is admitted on all hands that these are chiefly of Norse origin, and that they displaced the Celts whom they found in possession. It is not likely that they exterminated them, but rather that they reduced them to a state of bondage. So far as I am aware, there is no historic record of their dealings with the people when they took possession. The Celts may have dispossessed an earlier people. The only tradition which I heard current on the subject of the former inhabitants of the country was, that the remains of old dwellings were Pechts' houses, and that those who lived in them were little men. Some have held that the Norwegian invaders, who were tall and fair complexioned, brought with them slaves, bondmen and bondwomen, who were of the same race as the Finns, and who were of short stature and of swarthy complexion. If this was so, the difference that exists in the stature and general

appearance of the people can easily be accounted for. It is well known that in successive generations, even at remote intervals, the peculiarities of ancestors are transmitted. The laws of heredity, so far as ascertained, show that a complete fusion of races, so as to produce a new and different type, does not take place, but that, in virtue of a directing principle unknown to us, there is a tendency to revert to the distinct type either on the side of the father or mother from which the offspring has descended. Of course this is entirely apart from the change which takes place in a race in virtue of changed climatic conditions. In some districts the races seem very much mixed. In others the Norwegian race seems predominant. It is very interesting, for example, to compare photographs of people in some places on the coast of Shetland, with those of people in Norway. I was shown photographs of people taken near Drontheim, and Tromsoe, and these possessed a wonderful resemblance to people living in Lunnasting, Unst, and other places in Shetland.

Since the time that the Orkney and Shetland Islands were annexed to Scotland the ruling classes and principal landholders have been of Scotch descent. They and their retainers have, to a certain extent, mixed with the former possessors of the country. Thus we find among fishermen such surnames as Sinclair, Irvine, Mouatt, Tait, Stewart, Bruce, Fraser, Sutherland, in common use. The names introduced by the Norwegian conquerors before the introduction of Christianity have in a great measure disappeared. Such names were, Thorstein, Olaf, Sigurd, Rognvald, Harold, Magnus, Eric, and others. The introduction of Christianity led to the disuse of names which, in the eyes of churchmen, were identified with

heathenism, and the names of saints were favoured as tending to displace those connected with the system which was abolished. Hence the frequent recurrence of such apostolic names as John, James, Thomas, Andrew, Peter; and saints' names, Lawrence, George, Magnus, and Jerome. At the Reformation a further change took place. The Romish saints were not favoured by the Reformers, and in their stead Scripture names, such as Adam, Jacob, David, Hosea, Gideon, came into use. There still remains Halcro, Flaws, Tarl, Twatt, Leask, Tulloch, Goudie, Bolt, Stove. Instead of fixed surnames handed down from a very remote period, we meet everywhere with persons surnamed Johnson, Jamieson, Williamson, Anderson, Laurenson, Manson, and so on. Suppose a man named John had a son named William, the son would be designated as William Johnson. It was usual, as it still is in many places in Scotland, to call the grandson by the name of the grandfather, William's son would be styled John Williamson; thus the eldest son in each alternate generation would bear the same Christian name, and the surname would to the same extent and in the same way be fixed. This regularity, however, would be disturbed, and be prevented from being universal, by the introduction of a new name by the death of the eldest son, and where there were several sons in a family. In these cases complications arose which broke the double continuity of the transmission of surnames. Peculiarities existed as to female names. An unmarried daughter bore as a surname the name of her father. She was so described in deeds. Thus if Magnus had a daughter named Margaret who remained unmarried, she was known as Margaret, Magnus-doughter. It was not

uncommon to have a surname for name. Thus we meet with women named Bruce Arthur, Gifford Stewart, and the like. Laura and Ursula or Osla, names by no means uncommon, might well be used elsewhere.

Very few Dutchmen seem to have settled in the country, notwithstanding their annual visits for the purpose of fishing on the coasts, or trading at the booths which they set up. They were like migratory birds. They came with the fine weather and left on the approach of winter. An individual remained here and there. I was told of a Dutch doctor who practised the healing art for many years in Lerwick, and of a family in Levenwick of Dutch descent. Doubtless similar instances were to be found in other places, but they were few and far between.

Some have pretended to discover marks of Spanish blood in the dark complexions of the inhabitants of Fair Isle, and say that this arises from some of those who had been shipwrecked in one of the galleons comprising the great Armada marrying in the island; but the Fair Islanders repudiate the supposition with the greatest indignation. They say that the Spaniards during their stay lived entirely apart from the rest of the inhabitants, and that the mutual attitude of the two parties was that of distrust and hostility rather than friendship and alliance. Nor do they believe that they learned anything as regards dyeing and knitting from the Spaniards, though it has become the fashion to say so.

Very little land is held by those of Norse descent. Here and there some small properties are held by the Udal form of tenure. These have descended from father to son from the time when the connection with Norway existed. They serve as memorials of the gross injustice

and cruel oppression exercised by needy and unscrupulous adventurers. Men in desperate circumstances having influence at court, came from Scotland armed with charters and grants. These conveyed pretended and usurped rights and privileges, in virtue of which, by force and fraud, they gradually compelled the native proprietors to yield up their land. Causes of quarrel not unlike those of the wolf and the lamb in the fable, was often employed to strip the possessors of land which, by undisputed right, had been held without challenge for hundreds of years.

Some families descended from early Scotch settlers have disappeared. Among these may be mentioned such names as Stewart, Sinclair, and Mitchell. There is only one Scott, the laird of Melby. Gifford of Busta is represented in the female line. But a number still remain, such as Bruce, Mouatt, Edmonstone, Greirson, Irvine, Cheyne, Humphry. These, with little exception, own almost the whole of Shetland.

If in a sentimental point of view Ireland has wrongs arising from the dispossession of Celt by Saxon, these also exist in Shetland. Like the Irish towards the Saxons, the Shetlanders cherish a strong feeling of aversion to the Scotch, which displays itself occasionally. They hold the traditions which they have received, and believe that the present lairds are interlopers, and that they themselves have been defrauded and despoiled. They speak of these things only among themselves, and not openly; but those who have been in the country, and have gained their confidence, know that there is a strong undercurrent of feeling against Scotland and Scotchmen, while their affections are turned to Nor-

way as the land of their ancestors. They conceive that they have a claim even as things are, to dwell in the land, and that a proprietor has no right to remove them from his estate. They may not resist by force, seeing that resistance is useless, but they hold to their convictions. I will mention an instance which came under my notice, as an illustration of the ideas which prevail among them on this point. A tenant in Whalsay of the name of Irvine had fallen into arrears with his landlord. His croft was let to another, and he was ordered to quit the island. He left the croft quite peaceably, but refused to leave the island. He built a house on the scattald or common, and took up his abode there with his wife and children. He was a stout, powerful man, and industrious enough, but his wife was thriftless and wasteful, and he had thus come to poverty. Seeing that he had acted in defiance of the proprietor, the ground officer was sent to remove him by force. The ground officer was the elder, Thomas Henderson, whom I have already mentioned. He went to the house, prepared to carry out the proprietor's order. Now, Thomas was no coward. He had seen a good deal of the world, and was naturally bold and determined. Not much given to recount his adventures, he told me a story of what once happened to him in Australia, which will give some insight into his character as prompt and resolute. I will tell it in his own words. "Being unlucky at one part of the diggings, I was travelling to another where considerable finds of gold were being made. As I travelled to the place I came to a shanty or wayside inn, where was a restaurant. I laid down my swag and went inside, but the place was full and I went out again until such time as I could go in and get some

refreshment in my turn. When hanging about, I went up to a horse which was fastened to the fence beside the house. Having nothing to do, I spoke to the horse, patted him on the neck and was stroking him when a man came out in a violent rage, and addressing me said, "You rascal, you wont shake that horse," meaning that I would not loose him and ride off with him as was sometimes done." I said that I was only stroking the horse and had no intention of stealing him. On coming close up to me he said, "You fellow, would you bandy words with me," and at once drew a pistol from his belt to shoot me. I in a moment," said Thomas, "grasped him by the right shoulder with my left hand and thrusting my right hand into the breast of my guernsey took hold of my bowie-knife, and said, "If you cock that pistol you are a dead man, my weapon will not miss fire." On hearing this he hesitated to use the pistol, and the landlord and two or three more who, on becoming aware of what was going on, rushed out, separated us. The man, who was afterwards discovered to be a bushranger, took his horse and rode off."

On this occasion, when Thomas went in obedience to orders to the house of the man who was to be evicted, he met with the most determined resistance. He found the man at the door armed with a large knife such as is used for splitting fish, and his wife with a hatchet. Both assured him that if he crossed the threshold he would be cut down. Being now a douce elder of the kirk, and not wishing to proceed to extremities, he withdrew and reported to his employer what had occurred. But no further steps were taken, and the man was allowed to remain.

The relations between landlord and tenant were some-

what peculiar. Crofts were let along with right of pasture on the scattald. The right to pasture horses, cattle, and sheep, was held in common. There was no limit to the amount of stock which each could place on the scattald. The tenants were bound to fish to the landlord, and were not allowed to sell their fish to any other purchaser. The price was not fixed until after the fishing, and was dependant on the returns for cured fish got from the markets to which the cured fish was sent. The landlord kept one or more curing establishments and employed a great many hands in splitting, washing, and curing the fish, which consisted of ling, cod, and tusk, there being formerly no means for sending away other fish, with the exception it may be of herrings, which were cured in the usual way. The landlord also kept a shop called a booth, containing all sorts of goods necessary for the use of a household and fishing gear. He furnished boats for the fishing. No other shop was allowed to be opened on his estate and no tenant of his was permitted to deal at another shop. A reckoning was made between landlord and tenant once a year. When this took place the account for goods supplied at the shop for the past twelve months was read over to the tenant and against this was set his payments in money, if any, and what was due to him for the fish he had caught and delivered at the fish-curing establishment. If there was a balance in the fisherman's favour it was carried forward to his credit in next account. If it was against him it was brought forward in a similar way and placed on the debit side. In this way money very seldom passed between the parties. Now, in this state of matters everything depended on the honour and good faith of the landlord. The

quality and even quantity of the goods, the actings of his subordinates, the price given for the fish at the time of settling, were all in his hands. In the case of a divergence of opinion on any of these points there was no appeal open to the tenant. He dared not utter a complaint for fear of consequences. He was virtually, if a change of proprietors took place, bought and sold along with the estate, like the salters and colliers in other places. But a good many proprietors grew tired of acting as merchants and fish-curers, and sublet their lands and tenants to middlemen. These carried on the same system of barter, or what has been called the truck system. It may be supposed that these middlemen would not have the same forbearance with unsuccessful fishermen as the proprietor had. The fishermen themselves, in the case of having real or imaginary wrongs to complain of, would not be so slow to publish their grievances to the world. Such an outcry was raised that a Royal Commission took evidence regarding the truck system. Legislation, and especially the ventilation of the question in public, put a stop to some abuses, but it will be difficult to abolish barter entirely. In defence of the system it was said, "Here are people who have no money to buy provisions for themselves and families, or provide outfit for the fishing. If the landlord makes them advances, he must have some security for repayment. If they are to be at liberty to dispose for ready money to others their cattle or fish, they will spend the proceeds at other shops, and leave their landlord in the lurch." On the other hand, it was said that the truck system discourages industry, and leaves room for the imputation of fraud and extortion, and is utterly inconsistent with that mode of dealing between man and

man which should prevail in a free country. In most places, however, restrictions are now done away with, and the fishermen are left free to make their purchases wherever they choose. This has taken place, partly from the influence of public opinion, and partly from the more improved and extended scale on which the fishings are now carried on. With the increased circulation of newspapers, from the extension of the suffrage, and the zeal with which the defence of crofters' rights, real or imaginary, have been taken up, it is not likely that any glaring case of oppression will remain unknown to the world at large.

CHAPTER XVII.

Language—Remains of Norse—Shetlanders a Superior Race—Education—Rising in the World—Contentment—Love of Home—Prejudice against Banks—Propensity to Sarcasm—Wrecks—Salvage of Wood—Concealment of Wreckage—Plundering a Faroe Smack—Boiling Oranges.

THE speech of the country is broad Scotch. This is mixed with a few words retained from the Norse, and which are in common use. In names of places these universally occur, as in Lora-feldt, Fit-fell, Burra-voe, Sand-wick, Scaw-ting, Ting-wall, Lax-firth, Strom-ness, Cullivoe, Selivoe. A glossary of words, compiled by the late Mr. Edmonstone of Buness, Unst, serves to show the extent into which the Norse enters in the every-day language of the people. The accent and intonation are mild and soft, quite different from what is heard in Scotland. It would seem as if, when they had lost the Norse words, they had retained the mode of speaking them. The people are very polite to strangers. They are mild and gentle in their way of speaking to each other. If you meet any one on the road you will at once be saluted with "Good morning," or "Good evening, sir," as the case may be. In the household where you may be residing, a servant will address you in a similar way as you come in to breakfast. You are reminded by the general manners, of the politeness of our continental

neighbours rather than of the stiffness and reserve of the Scotch.

In accounts of the country published at different times, it is stated that at a comparatively recent period, certainly not more than a hundred years ago, individuals were found in outlying districts who could repeat the Lord's Prayer in the Norse, and also verses used as charms or incantations, but even these lingering ties of connection with a foreign tongue have now disappeared.

The Shetlanders are a very superior and intelligent race. They are universally fond of reading, and show a great aptitude for acquiring learning. As an instance of this I may mention that when schools in the islands were placed under government inspection, it was thought that, taking into consideration the disadvantages under which the children laboured, it would be necessary to adopt a lower standard of examination than for the country at large. But inspectors of schools found as a pleasant surprise that equally good results were to be found here in examining schools as in other more highly favoured localities, and that there was no need for adopting a lower standard of examination than was elsewhere in use. In visiting a country school on an ordinary occasion thirty years ago I could not help being struck with the appearance of the scholars. Many of the boys were bare headed, had neither jacket nor vest, shoes or stockings. Their trousers were made of wadmal, a coarse cloth-like plaiding. The cloth had never been dyed, but was gradually becoming a dingy brown by contact with the mud and other substances. The girls were also barefooted. In one or two cases they wore goloshes of indiarubber instead of shoes. But some of them had

crinoline, or what looked like it, and this contrasted rather strangely with bare feet. They were in general, boys and girls, pale and rather delicate looking, with regular features and light coloured hair. But there was no dullness or vacant looks among them. They seemed lively, full of mental activity and intelligence. From their habits of application and liking for study, if opportunities present themselves in their future course of life, they rise in the world. A great many go to sea in the mercantile marine, and in the course of time rise to be shipmasters in this way. Though they may only be able to read and write and know the elements of arithmetic, they endeavour to improve. A Shetland lad can hardly enter any large vessel where he will not find some of his countrymen. These are always willing in a time of leisure to give him help in his lessons, so that instead of forgetting what he had before learned he improves, and gets some idea even of the principles of navigation. Then when he has been a few years at sea he takes a winter to himself and spends it in some large seaport where there is a school for navigation. He then passes his examination for mate, and finally, master. This is a very common occurrence. I have known cases where Shetland sailors, after being married, attended a navigation school, and on passing got the command in the course of time of large vessels trading to China, Australia, and other distant parts of the world. And it is characteristic of them that they rarely forget the land of their birth, or fail to return to fulfil the marriage engagements which they have formed. The attachment which they show to their native place is very remarkable. Men who have gone to the colonies or to places in the south, consider it their highest ambition to return and get

a footing at home. If they can they buy a bit of ground. If this is not to be had for purchase they lease some. On this a house is built, the land drained, trenched and cultivated with great spirit, and they settle down, and in occasional fishing, in the cultivation of their crofts, and the society of their families and friends, seem perfectly happy and comfortable. In my own parish I met several examples of this kind. Two brothers named Rendall had been at the diggings in New Zealand. One had saved £1200, the other £1400. They returned to Whalsay. Each built a small house consisting of a but and a ben. In due course both married wives. Having a competence they did not expose themselves to the fatigue of the haaf fishing, but in summer fished along the coast in a small boat belonging to themselves. At other times they laboured at a very small piece of land, which they had on lease. They endeavoured in this way to make their living without trenching on the principal which they had put into the bank, or even, it was reported, without spending the interest which accrued to them from the principal.

Speaking of banks I may mention that a great prejudice prevailed throughout Shetland against entrusting money to banks. There was a fear that if money was thus deposited, the fact would come to the ears of the landlord, and the rent would be raised. There had also been a great calamity which had befallen those who, about fifty years ago, had entrusted their money to a trader in Lerwick. This man, who dealt in an extensive way as merchant, fish-curer, and land agent, set up a private bank, and gave a high rate of interest to depositors. This went on for a time until a crash came. The private bank stopped payment. The hard-earned savings of a

number of families were swallowed up, and loud was the outcry, not yet forgotten, against the man who had brought misery on many a household. Consequently there was hoarding on a very extensive scale. In many a chest throughout the islands, in addition to the current coin of the realm, there was a goodly store of Dutch gulden and other foreign coins. Gradually, however, confidence has been restored, and the banks in Lerwick, I doubt not, could show considerable deposits from all classes of the community.

But to return to the subject. Shetlanders are apt to be sarcastic, and in their own way witty in their remarks on themselves and others. Wit directed against individuals so as to turn them into ridicule is denominated skimp. They are fond of practical joking, which disposition manifests itself in a variety of ways. Some years ago a successful hoax was perpetrated on the *Scotsman*. A circumstantial account was sent to that newspaper of a Fenian landing in Unst. It was set forth in detail that some vessels of a suspicious appearance had been seen for some hours hovering on the coast, that a boat's crew had landed and taken possession of cattle, and had also seized the principal inhabitants and taken them on board ship, where they were detained as hostages. Such was the alarm caused by the report that a government vessel was about to be sent to the north, when the account was discovered to be a fabrication.

As a race they are more ready to put forth all their energies under the influence of strong impulse or excitemen than to plod or labour day after day. If there is word of a wreck for instance, you will see those who in the winter season hang about listless and indolent, seem-

ing incapable of exertion, at once aroused and ready to venture life and limb for the sake of a little remuneration in saving life and property. In saving life they need no stimulus in the form of a pecuniary reward. In rescuing others they are ready to hazard their own lives. But when word has been passed that a timber-laden ship has come ashore, crowds assemble from all quarters. On a rock-bound coast a vessel soon breaks up, and her contents float on the water or are thrown on shore by the waves. The greatest eagerness is shown in laying hold of pieces of wood as soon as they come near enough to be laid hold of. Lives are lost from time to time by venturing into dangerous places for pieces of wreck.

I remember on one occasion when a great quantity of wood came ashore from some vessel which had been wrecked, and broke up near the land, a young married man lost his life in this way. There was an opening in the rocks into which the sea flowed. The rocks at this place were about a hundred feet high. On one side a difficult path led down to the sea from the summit. Three young men had gone down a short distance by means of this path to lay hold of some pieces of wood which were swept near the place by the advancing waves. One of these waves struck against the cliff opposite at some distance off, and part of it rebounding, nearly carried the three into the foaming abyss below. Two of them had hold of a rift of the rock and held on until danger was past; but the other was struck off the rock as if he had been a feather, and his body was not found for several days. When discovered it was found on the bottom near the place. He was quite a young man, and left a widow and two children. Her distress may be imagined. Knowing

the danger involved in trying to save wreckage at the place, she had tried all in her power to prevent her husband from going out of the house on that morning, but to no purpose. It would seem that the excitement rather than the mere value of the articles saved is what, by a sort of fascination, irresistibly attracts people to such hazards as are involved. In the case of a wreck, everything saved comes into the custody of a Receiver of Wreck, who has deputies in various districts. But as it is impossible for government officials to be instantly on the spot where a wreck occurs, and as the amount of remuneration is altogether disproportioned to the labour and hazard of the work of salvage, a good deal of plunder is stowed away and never declared to the Custom House officials. Besides, when valuable property has been preserved and given up in the regular way, when a public sale takes place, the proceeds of which go in part to pay the salvers, there is often little competition, and a mere trifle is realized. I have heard grievous complaints on this score. I have been told of cases where men had laboured for hours, and at great risk to themselves had secured valuable logs of yellow pine. These were given up to the government official and taken into his custody. A sale was advertised, and from the proceeds, after all expenses were paid, only a few pence each were paid to the salvers of the wood. Now this was surely a very inadequate remuneration, and little calculated to reward honesty or stimulate exertion in the effort to save valuable property. In fact, under the present system, there is every temptation to dishonesty, and to conceal everything not too large or heavy. Wood is especially tempting in a country where none grows. Logs of

mahogany, teak, or yellow pine would be too large to appropriate, though I have seen a plank of mahogany which had been sawn from a log cast ashore; and I have also seen rooms boarded all round, from floor to ceiling, with yellow pine. Deals and battens, being more easily handled and concealed, are stowed away in the mosses, and remain covered over with sods until they can be conveniently taken home. I once went to the place where a wreck had taken place. It had been one of those water-logged timber vessels which float for weeks on the North Sea after being abandoned by the crew, and then come on shore after, it may be, the wind has blown for a long time in the same direction. I had heard of a wrecked ship being public property; I now saw it. The scene was like a fair on a small scale. Men, women, and children were assembled from all quarters; some were going home, and some had newly arrived. Of the ship the sails and running rigging had mostly disappeared. Everything portable had been carried off down to the hull, and this was being hewed into with hatchets to get at the copper-bolts and fastenings. Some wood had been laid aside in heaps for the Custom House officials. A great deal had been carried away for private use. I heard that some had got as much as would serve them for twenty years. Being doubtful how my presence would be regarded I did not go too near the wreck, and my stay was very short. I do not think that I was welcome, for as I went home I observed that whenever those who were returning to get another share of the spoil caught sight of me even at a distance, they made a considerable detour to avoid me.

Wrecks generally occur in spring. When long continued gales from the east prevail, and vessels have been

hove to, they sometimes drift on shore. At other times crews are benumbed with cold and long exposure, and the sails becoming spent, the vessel becomes unmanageable. This is especially the case with Norwegian vessels which, though they carry timber even in winter, are often old and ill found. They are consequently more ready to give way in long continued stress of weather, when crossing the North Sea to British ports. From time to time prosecutions take place of those who conceal such things as casks of paraffin or logs of wood—things of considerable value. But wrecks, far more numerous, especially on the west from want of lighthouses, than they ought to be, are not attended with such circumstances of universal plunder as they once were. I remember on the east coast a vessel coming ashore at the mouth of Douro Voe. It was in the spring, and the vessel was on her way from Copenhagen to Faroe. She was a smack of no great size, and carried a general cargo of groceries, cloth, and other goods. When she came ashore there were only two on board, both dead —one the master, the other a boy. The body of the master, it was said, still retained some warmth ; but all efforts to restore animation were in vain. He had been so well clothed that his inner clothing was quite dry, though the sea had washed him ashore breaking over the ship. The crew had all perished with cold and exhaustion during a long continued gale from the east, which had gradually caused the vessel to drift on to the land. With the exception of the master and the boy all the others had disappeared, having doubtless been swept overboard. Whenever the vessel came ashore she was plundered by the people in the neighbourhood ; but a search having been made in various houses, and some of the stolen property

having been discovered, a number of the parties implicated were sent to jail. In the olden time matters were differently managed. When a ship came ashore everyone was at liberty to take what he liked, and no awkward questions were asked afterwards. It is singular to be told that such ignorance prevailed regarding foreign productions as has been related of the natives in some outlying districts in former times. At one place several boxes of oranges came ashore, and those who found them boiled some of them, thinking they required to be cooked in this way, like potatoes. At another place a cask of treacle had been got hold of. An opening having been made in the cask, the contents were thought to be tar. Some of it was accordingly boiled, and applied for the same purpose as tar, in pitching the bottom of a boat. It was not until a cow began licking the boat that the mistake was discovered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Idleness of young men in Winter—Spring—Mending dykes—Digging—Carrying manure—Bedding cattle—Scalping ground—Faroe fishing.

WINTER to many of the Shetlanders was a period of inactivity. The married women had their usual house work. The young women spent the most of their time in knitting. They met in parties in different houses by turns, and passed the evenings until a late hour amusing themselves with tales and gossip as is done in more fashionable circles. The young men, save for the occasional excitement of a wreck, netting sillocks, visiting, or undergoing drill in the Naval Reserve, were literally idle most of the winter. Some plied a handicraft, but these were few. The idleness in winter resembled the habits of the people of the western isles, and indeed other districts, and if you examine into the matter a similar state of things prevails wherever it can be indulged in. I suppose work is a matter of necessity rather than choice until habit makes it second nature. If people have means of living without working they will prefer to be idle. It is no uncommon thing in Scotland for masons and other tradesmen to go over to America in spring and work for a season, and then on returning home remain idle until necessity compels them to renew their toil. So, if the Shetland young men have wrought hard during part of the year,

either in the country itself or abroad, and choose to remain idle during the winter, though unremitting industry would be more likely to place them beyond the reach of want in old age; in being idle and amusing themselves they are only doing what is natural, and what most people without a motive to exertion do. But when spring came in idleness and lethargy were at an end. The land had to be cultivated, and then the haaf fishing began. The first thing in preparing to begin cultivation was to mend the dykes. This, as in Holland, is an affair of great importance. But here it is not to keep out the water, but the sheep, cattle, and shelties. These during winter are allowed to roam over the whole country, cultivated and uncultivated. When winter is over they are driven to the uncultivated part, and the dykes which are formed of turf are repaired and placed in such a condition as to exclude them from the land in cultivation. Gates are placed at intervals, which must be kept scrupulously closed. If left open for a very short time there would soon be an invasion; some knowing cows learn to open the gates. The dykes being completed, the ditches are cleared out. These in low lying places are very frequent, and divide the land into small plots. It is like Holland in miniature. Next comes carrying out the manure from the dunghills which have been accumulating for the past year, and from the byres, which on a small scale are like the Augean stables, not having been cleaned for months. The cattle have been bedded with sods from the hillside, and by spring-time have been so elevated as nearly to touch the rafters with their backs. Sods or divots are used for bedding to the cattle during the whole year instead of

straw. This is because of the scarcity of this commodity. From overstocking there is not nearly enough of fodder, and various devices are employed to eke it out. The straw is often given to the cattle unthreshed. For the threave of twenty-four sheaves the price is from four to five shillings. By constantly carrying in peat-moss or earth from the hill to the byres and dunghills, the pasture is in many places very much deteriorated, large tracts being scalped to the bare rock. Hence it is stated that the quantity of wool raised on the old pasture-ground is not nearly so great as when the connection with Norway existed. This would appear from the very large quantity of wool sent to the bishop at Bergen, of whose diocese these islands formed a part. Most proprietors have forbidden the practice of paring the surface for bedding, but it is difficult to stop it altogether. Another practice deteriorates part of the cultivated ground. This is the way in which it is dug over. As most of the land slopes, in digging, the sods are turned over down hill. This causes in time an accummulation of excellent soil at the bottom of the field and leaves the other end bare. A regulation on some estates is that the first row of sods should be carried uphill so as to fill up the void occasioned by digging, but this is seldom attended to. The dung is carried from the dungheap, which is invariably before the door, to the fields by the women in baskets of straw called kishies. The men fill the kishies with graips, but do not in general bear burdens. As the contents of the dunghills consist largely of fish offal, and other highly odoriferous substances, the smell which pervades the land for two or three weeks may be more easily imagined than described. The work is most exhausting. Notwith-

standing the use of a more generous diet than is commonly partaken of, those engaged in this truly arduous task become very much reduced in flesh. An old man told me one day that their flesh was worn off their bones before the voar was done. The manure having been carried to the land, it is then dug with the Shetland spade. Three diggers stand close to each other, insert their spades at the same time, and turn over a portion of the ground. Being very dexterous at the work, and labouring with great diligence, far more ground is turned over in a day than one could conceive possible. What is dug each day is sown in the evening. The sower stands and sows about him in a circle. He then steps forward and sows another piece in the same way, until the operation is completed. After sowing, a man or woman drags a light harrow over the ground to cover in the seed.

The period of sowing being over, the haaf fishing is engaged in. A good many go to the Greenland seal fishing, and when that is over, to the Davis' Straits whale fishing, returning in the end of autumn. The Faroe cod fishing gives employment to a large number, chiefly of young men. In this the remuneration depends on the take of fish. Those engaged receive an allowance of bread, and as much fish as they care for, and money proportioned to the success of the season. Fair wages are generally earned, but the work is very disagreeable. Working hand lines, by which the fish are caught, over the side of the vessel keep the hands constantly wet. But as there seems no difficulty in getting a supply of hands to man the Faroe fishing smacks, discomfort must be regarded as a minor consideration when the pay is good.

Faroe smacks leaving Shetland early in the season make three trips, catching sometimes 20,000 cod each time. Some also go to Rockall. The takes here vary according as fish are scarce or plentiful. Last year some smacks made the extraordinary take of 50,000 cod. It is stated that the size and quality of the fish on the Faroe banks have been altered since the fishing has been systematically prosecuted on an extended scale. When the banks were first resorted to by Shetland smacks, many of the codfish were coarse and overgrown. Now they are of a smaller and more uniform size, and of better quality. Some of the smacks have wells which preserve the fish alive. When the cargo of dead fish stowed away in casks is completed, a run is made to Grimsby, and the live cod, from two hundred to three hundred in number, are disposed of at a high price, as much as thirty shillings having been got for a single fish.

CHAPTER XIX.

Fondness for pets—Capture of otters—Otters easily tamed—Anecdotes about Otters, Swans, Seagulls, Eagles—A sportsman's notes—Shooting Porpoises—Eyrie on a holm—Former way of taking Eagles—Ravens.

SHETLANDERS are very fond of pet animals. Seals have been domesticated, and it is no uncommon occurrence to capture otters and tame them. When taken young these are easily domesticated, and will follow their master like a dog. The method of taking them shows considerable ingenuity. Near the sea-beach a spot is selected where their track is observed in going along from one part of the shore to another. Here a structure is formed of stones, above ground, just like a drain or rabbit burrow. At one end of this is placed a flat stone on its edge with a small hole through it to admit the light. At the other end which is the entrance is a piece of wood like a door, formed to slide up and down like a portcullis, and fastened by a cord to a peg in the inside of the trap. When the otter in prowling among the rocks and keeping his usual track near the sea comes to the place, he enters at the open door. As he goes in he disturbs the cord and the door slips down behind him. He then makes for the hole at the opposite end where the light comes in, and never attempting to return as he entered gnaws at the hole in the stone until he is captured. The skin of the otter is, when dressed, very glossy and beautiful, equal

indeed to the finest sealskin. Since firearms have become common the numbers of the otters have been very much diminished. The gun tax may help to preserve them. I was told by a fisherman in the Skerries that he had killed twenty, in the course of time, by shooting them. This he had done in fine mornings by watching at the sea-side. When killed, their skins are sold to hawkers in Lerwick, and fetch from five shillings to seven shillings and sixpence. I have seen vests made of them after they were sent to London to be dressed. They looked very warm and comfortable, besides being quite elegant in appearance. It is only when taken young that the otter can be domesticated. I have met with several people who had kept them as pets. The late proprietor of Melby told me that a tenant on his property had a pair which were very tame. He advised the owner to send them to London to the Zoological Gardens, assuring him that he would see that he got a good price for them. But as the owner wished to see if they would breed in captivity, he delayed doing so. Unfortunately the pair wandered off one day to a loch at some little distance, and were knocked on the head by a stranger who thought he had fallen in with a prize. A gentleman in Lerwick had one which used to follow him to his office along the streets ; but unfortunately it came to an untimely end : a stranger, seeing it by the sea side one day, taking it for a wild animal killed it. The same gentleman to whom I referred seemed to have the faculty of training animals to perfection. His house was never without a pet of one kind or another, either bird or beast. He sometimes met with disappointments in losing his favourites in the same way as he lost the otter ; one he lost after a very short possession of it. Knowing his tastes

a friend brought him a fine falcon from Iceland. The bird was brought home in a large wooden box or cage, with openings in it for air and light. The box was brought to the kitchen from the ship in which it was carried from Iceland, and the whole family came downstairs to see one of the far-famed Iceland falcons. But the first sight of it was the last, for no sooner was the cage incautiously opened than the bird dashed through a pane in the window of the kitchen, and was seen no more.

Swans are sometimes tamed. These birds pass over the islands in spring to the haunts in which they breed in the far north, and return in the direction of the south in the end of autumn. Resting by night in the fresh water lochs they are sometimes stalked and shot. In the island of Whalsay the loch of Challister was a favourite resting place, and here sometimes one was shot. A man in Brough had wounded and captured one. It was young, having been but bred that season. As one of its wings only was broken, it lived and became quite tame. He told me that if it went out of sight among the other houses he had only to call "Swannie, swannie," and it immediately came to its owner. But one day it snapt a bit of bread out of the hand of a neighbour's child, who ran home crying. The father of the child rushed out of the house, and seeing the swan, and thinking it had bitten the child, struck it with a peat spade, and killed it. The man to whom it belonged told me the story; and when he said that the bird died, I thought he did so with tears in his eyes.

Speaking of swans, I was told of a disappointment which befel a man in Lunnasting, who once thought that he had an excellent opportunity of securing one. A flock

of these birds had alighted far from houses on the hillside, near an enclosure called a crou, where sheep are collected from time to time. The man had seen them alight, and on watching them observed that they had moved up to this enclosure. Crawling along the back of a turf dyke which led up to the place, he reached the sheepfold without causing an alarm. Waiting for a moment to collect himself, he jumped over the dyke, and had no difficulty in laying hold of one; but the rest, instead of taking flight, so beat him with their wings that he was glad to get away as empty-handed as he came, and so beaten and bruised that he could scarcely walk home. It reminded one of Mungo Park's story of the inhabitants of D——— trying to catch a lion alive. But the most common pet was the sea-gull, or in rare cases the bouxie. As fresh fish could be got almost every day of the year, these birds were easily kept alive. A man told me that his family had kept a tame gull for a good many years. This bird—a female—regularly went away in the first of the breeding season, and then returned at its close. On one occasion she came home accompanied by three young ones as large as herself. She herself alighted with great confidence, as usual, and entered the house, thinking her brood would follow. As they did not, but kept at a respectful distance from the house, she went out and seemed to try to induce them to enter along with her; but all her efforts were in vain, and at last they flew away, and she remained to take her usual place as the favourite of the family.

Since I left the country I received several notes regarding the habits of eagles, from a parishioner, which are not devoid of interest. The name of my informant is Laurence Lawrenson. He was one of those individuals

who, in other places become poachers or gamekeepers, and in certain more favourable circumstances are styled by themselves and others naturalists. This man had been left by his father in comparative comfort, and had received a fair education. His writing, which I have now before me, is good, and the spelling correct. But he was rather fonder of the gun than of the spade, and liked better to go on pleasure excursions than to the regular fishing. So when I knew him, he got a living by doing such work as keeping tally for the firm which had the shop in the island, when goods of various kinds, such as coal, kelp or fish, were weighed. His wife also got work from the same firm in cleaning and assisting to cure fish. He had no croft—that had been given up—but lived in a rented house, in a part of Whalsay called Sodom. His family consisted of sons, who were remarkably intelligent lads. They all went elsewhere to get employment, some to the colonies, others to the south of Scotland. But with scarcely an exception, all have got on very well in the world, and have been very dutiful to their parents. Laurence was troubled with ill health, and as he had great faith in drugs, he used to send for such pills as he saw advertised. And though he was little the better of this, when one nostrum failed he was always ready to try another. In his young days he had killed a good many seals, otters and porpoises, by shooting them. I did not think of asking him how many seals and otters he had killed, but I recollect his telling me in connection with his description of killing porpoises, that he had kept an account of how many of them he had secured. The number amounted to no fewer than 3000. And I have no reason to doubt his statement. He shot the porpoises in this way.

Whenever any of them appeared near the land he went with his boat, and a companion to assist him, in quest of them. As the porpoise swims generally in a direct line, and rises from time to time to the surface, it was only necessary on coming near one to watch the direction it was moving in, and then when it went down, to row quickly in the direction in which it might be expected to appear. Standing in the bow of the boat with gun in hand, whenever the porpoise came up he fired. It was just whale-fishing in miniature. The blubber was then taken off the animal and boiled down for oil. The result of this unremitting persecution is that around the coast the porpoise is almost extinct. The same may be said of the seal and otter, both when captured being objects of much greater value than porpoises. As a reward was given for the destruction of eagles, his attention was also turned in this direction, and his notes refer to them. He states that forty years ago, twelve pairs of eagles were known to breed in the Shetland Islands. The places were Hancliff Head or Noss Head, the Ord of Bressay, Sumburgh Head, Fitfell Head, the Holms of Meikle Roe, the Longhead on the west side of North Mavine, Hillswick, the north-west side of Roeness Hill, the Mull, Unst, the Foreland of Fetlar, Nordrou's Goe, Neeps Gravelind Yell, The Horse of Burravoe, South Yell. In two of these places only, viz., Fitfell Head and Roeness Hill, are they now known to breed. Such was his statement as to their breeding places. During my three years residence in the country I only once saw a pair. They were soaring at a great height and moving slowly in a southerly direction. I lost sight of them, but in about half-a-hour they returned, sailing along in the direction whence they came. I was

told that three of these birds remained a whole winter near Islesburgh in North Mavine parish. To his credit the farmer whose land they frequented strictly prohibited his servants or any one from molesting them. My informant further tells me regarding eagles that in 1840 a young lad, Adam Lowrie, being a servant in Noss Island, found an eagle's nest with one egg in it. He let it alone for a week. By the end of that time there were two eggs in the nest. Thinking that the eagle might easily lay as many eggs as a goose, being rather larger, he left the eggs. At the end of fourteen days from his first visit he returned and found a third egg. But this was only half the size of the others, being no larger than a common hen's egg. Going with the three eggs to Lerwick, he sold them to an umbrella-mender for seven and sixpence, which was considered a great price in those days. He then mentions an occurrence which he had himself witnessed. He says, "Being in South Yell in the month of May, 1843, shooting seals, I had to get up early in the mornings. I had some distance to go before I came to the seals. I had to walk along the margin of a loch near the sea side. The loch was about fourteen hundred yards long. The sun was not risen. Hearing the shrill croaking of an eagle I looked up and saw two eagles soaring at a great height above the loch. At that moment a large trout came up to the surface of the water to play. One of the eagles seeing him, made a sudden dart at him, though at a tremendous height in the air. He did not miss his mark and fastening his talons in the tail part of the trout he mounted with his prey high in the air. I lost no time in running to get a shot at him, but found that he was too high for shot to reach him. As I looked up at him

the trout made a desperate struggle and the eagle lost his hold. Down the trout came. I thought he would fall on the land, but no, he fell into the loch near the shore, and was stunned by the fall. I ran and jumped into the water up to the middle. But I did not succeed in capturing the fish. So I lost both the trout and the eagle. The eagle seemed angry and roared exceedingly for the loss of his breakfast, and I got no more than the eagle."

As to the manner in which the eagle was captured in Shetland in ancient times, he says, "The top of the highest hill or warth was taken. A circular house was built of rough stones, six or seven feet in diameter at the bottom, and five feet at the top with an incline, and four feet in height, of course without a roof. Into the house was laid a dead dog. When the eagle came flying over he saw the dog and came down at once and set him on the top of the wall. Seeing no danger he jumped down to the carcase with his wings close to his body, and fastening his talons in his prey, he had to stretch out his wings before he could take it away. But he found to his sorrow that this could not be done, as the eagle is seven feet in flight from tip to tip, and he had to sit as a prisoner till his enemy came, who cut off his head and sold it for half a crown. This account is perfectly correct, though I doubt much that the eagle could not be taken in that manner in the present day. I have tried him in the same way as prescribed, but he took good care not to go down into the house."

"The eagle still continued to hatch in Noss Head till about twenty years ago, when a man of the name of John Hall, who was residing in Noss as a servant, found an eagle's nest. Being a native of Foulah, he considered him-

self an expert climber, and tried to go to the eyrie. As he approached near the nest, the infuriated bird flew at him, and, fastening his talons in the man, made him let go his hold. He fell the fearful height of 650 feet, and was seen no more. It is commonly reported to this day that the eagle lost his life with the man, as the eagle has not been known to hatch since in Noss Head. I consider this, however, as a vague report, and merely supposition. In 1886 a pair of eagles again did so, only to be robbed. . . . About the year 1830 the eagle had her nest in the highest cliffs of the Horse of Burravoe, South Yell. In the month of April, that same year, a boat from the east side of Yell, with three men on board, went off to the Horse of Burravoe to fish for piltocks. When near the shore, they looked up to the eagle's nest and wondered that she had hatched so near to the summit of the banks. The eyrie was on the top of a decayed and rotten rock not more than twenty-four feet from the summit. All of a sudden the rocks gave way, and down came the eyrie and went into the sea, to the great grief of the parent birds. Had the boat been twenty yards nearer to the place, they must have been destroyed. I have inquired concerning this report, and found it true. But mark what followed next year. The aged birds, finding themselves foiled, determined to make sure work this year. There is a small flat holm on the south side of the Horse of Burravoe. There they thought proper to make their next nest. They succeeded, no person thinking that an eagle would hatch in a flat holm not much above the level of the sea. In the month of May, the proprietor of Burravoe sent a servant of his, named Charles Borthwick, into the holm to mow some grass for the cattle. When he landed

in the holm he saw two large grey birds running over the holm. He thought they were the young of the large gull, or swabie, as they are commonly called ; but, coming nearer, to his surprise he saw two young eaglets more than half fledged. He ran and captured them both, and went home rejoicing. The grass was forgotten at this time. The laird gave him one of them and kept the other. Both lived and tamed very well. Charles sold his to Andrew Bain, Lerwick, for three shillings and sixpence. I have often seen the one he sold to Bain, and had great sport with him. The eagle lived in Lerwick many years, and then his master sent him to a friend in the south."

Such are some of my correspondent's notes. I regret that I did not, when I had the opportunity, make further inquiries regarding his own adventures, which, I have reason to believe, were worth recording. As is well known, it is not the golden eagle, but the white-tailed or sea eagle, that is found in Shetland. It is rather larger than the golden eagle, and lives on fish, flesh, or any sort of carrion it may meet with. It is no wonder that eagles of both kinds are now very scarce. For fine specimens properly preserved, as much as five pounds is given. Eggs bring a couple of sovereigns each from wealthy collectors desirous to add to this kind of hoard. The consequence is that whenever an eagle is seen, game-keepers and others endeavour with trap or gun to secure the royal bird. When a pair breed in their ancestral eyrie, unless the spot is altogether inaccessible, some adventurous individual is let down by a rope to secure the eggs or young ones, which he immediately makes merchandise of. It is well to be told that, through the efforts of the Duke of Sutherland, in the deer forests of

Sutherlandshire, and the Marquis of Breadalbane in Perthshire, the golden eagle is likely to be preserved, notwithstanding the bait held out to shepherds and gamekeepers for specimens of birds and eggs. The peregrine falcon has become nearly as scarce as the eagle, and is very rarely seen. But ravens hold their ground and exist in goodly numbers. I was astonished when, on one occasion being on the summit of Fitful Head, I was surrounded by a large number of this bird of evil omen, which seemed to gather from all quarters, and kept up a loud and disagreeable croaking, so long as I was near their haunts. As they feed not only on carrion, but are continually on the watch to destroy young lambs in the early part of the season, and also sheep, if these are weak or sickly, they are detested by sheep owners. Yet in spite of their persecutors, and every man's hand is against them, by reason of their extraordinary vigilance and cunning, they can be rarely approached so as to be shot at. Besides when killed, they are of no use for stuffing as preserved specimens. No one would have them as a present. So it is that they remain and do not, at all events, decrease in the land.

CHAPTER XX.

Seagulls—Their Breeding Places—Grouse, Lapwings, Swallows—Temperature—Lerwick Museum—A Plague of Rats—Mice always numerous—Ponies—Native Sheep—Sheep-farming—Black Cattle.

SEA-BIRDS are numerous at all times, but especially in the breeding season, from the solan goose to the stormy petrel. The solan geese do not breed here, but the stormy petrel does. It has its nest, laying one egg of a pearly whiteness, generally among rocks and masses of loose stones, in the recesses of which, in the day-time, it may be heard giving forth a peculiar note. The heron, called hagra by the natives, is often seen by the sea-side. It is always alone. It does not breed in the country. But the most abundant of the sea-birds are gulls. These are of different varieties, from the large black-backed gull to those of the smallest size. The largest of these, the *larus marinus*, or larger black-backed gull, generally builds by itself on some rock or on a small island in the middle of a fresh-water loch. This is a powerful bird, and is said sometimes to attack lambs, and on that account it, as well as the raven, is proscribed by sheep-owners. The black-backed gull does not seem to roam about from place to place, but is confined to one particular locality. A pair which have taken up their resort on a skerry may be always seen at or near the same place. The common

gull, the *larus canus*, is more social in its habits, at least in breeding time. In the month of May these birds are found in large numbers on the Holm of the Loch of Collister. They are strictly preserved. No one is allowed to go on the island without leave from the proprietor. It is only visited on rare occasions for the purpose of collecting eggs. Of these as many as a thousand have been collected on one visit. These birds would breed in many other places were it not that their nests are mercilessly robbed.

I visited a loch in Aithsting where they breed. This was at Fogragirth. The proprietor of the place, the successor of the famous Robbie Douall, rowed me across to the island, which is the breeding-place. It was early in the season. The gulls, though they had assembled in large numbers, had only begun to form their nests. These were of withered grass on the ground, and in most places very near to each other. We got an egg here and there, in all about twenty. All the time we were on the holm the birds, in a cloud overhead, kept up a deafening clamour. This only ceased when we had left, and they had settled down on the ground again. The laird told that near the island on which the gulls breed, but in a part of the loch beside its outlet to the sea, he was in the habit of setting a hang net for sea trout. On one occasion, to his surprise, the net had disappeared. He could not account for this, ar there were no poachers to be dreaded, who might have anticipated him; so he got his boat, and searched around the place where the net had been set. In a short time he discovered it rolled up and twisted round a large fish. This was a sea trout of not less, he assured me, than a stone weight. The large size to which sea trout some-

times grow will account for the mistake which some have made of supposing that salmon are to be found in Shetland. What have been taken for salmon are only large specimens of trout; and though places are known by the name of Laxo and Laxfirth, such terms will apply to trout as well as salmon.

Other sea-gulls breed among the cliffs at numerous places. These birds are three years old before their plumage attains its snowy whiteness. Before that period they are of a grey colour, and do not breed. The bouxie or skua *(Lestris Cataractes)* has been already mentioned as found only on the Sneug in Foulah, and on Hermanness in Unst. In captivity, as for instance in a garden, with wings clipt and hopping about, it is a miserable contrast to the fierce and bold bird of the mountain, skimming rapidly through the air and suddenly swooping down on its quarry. The aland or Richardson's skua breeds in various places throughout the islands. It is singularly graceful and elegant in appearance on the wing, being formed for rapid flight, and able to turn in all directions with the greatest ease and quickness. In the extreme length and tapering of its wings and tail it resembles the swallow. It is about the size of the common pigeon. Both the bouxie and aland are predatory birds. Attacking other birds they, by dashing at them, terrify them, so that they disgorge what they have industriously caught or gathered for themselves; this the robbers seize in mid air before it has time to fall to the ground, and the despoiled birds have again to go to the sea and renew their toil.

No wild geese, any more than swans, breed in the country. They may be seen in air, flying in their usual order as they migrate in spring and autumn, but they rarely alight

so as to give a chance of being shot at. There is a large bird, commonly called the rain goose, which breeds near the margin of lochs, and may be seen flying from time to time between the sea and its breeding place. The eggs are as long as those of the domestic goose, but not so thick. There are two varieties—the black-throated *diver colymbus arcticus*, and the red-throated *diver colymbus septentrionalis*. The rock dove abounds wherever there are caves in which it may find shelter, and build its nest in safety. Almost the only song-bird is the lark, which, however, by its delightful song, makes up for the want of many others, and abounds everywhere. The sparrow and starling are so numerous as to be quite a nuisance, especially when the grain has begun to ripen. Neither partridges nor grouse are to be met with. In such a climate it would be absurd to attempt to introduce the former. Attempts have been made to stock the moors with grouse, but, so far as I am aware, as yet without success. I see no reason why they should not thrive if once they got a footing. In many districts there are extensive moors where heather grows luxuriantly, so as to afford food and shelter for them. I believe that the reason why attempts to introduce them have hitherto failed, have arisen not from the country being unsuited for them, but from the enemies they have had to contend with. The scattald, as it is called, is often scoured by men and dogs. The dogs especially scare and terrify the birds, and prevent them from breeding. The only chance of success lies in enclosing with wire fence the district where it is desired that grouse should be introduced, and keeping dogs as far as possible at a distance. Much would depend on keeping off trespassers in search of eggs. But

if the proprietor would express his wishes to the tenants that they should, as far as possible, assist him in the endeavour to introduce these birds, there would be little difficulty in doing so. The only question after all would be whether it would be more profitable to preserve game or to allow the scattald, as at present, to be used for grazing purposes. No rooks have found their way so far north. They have, indeed, come part of the way, to Kirkwall, where lately a colony of this interesting family have taken up their abode among the old trees near St. Magnus Cathedral. Some have also built their nests in the cliffs at Deerness. In the construction of these, for want of twigs, they have used dried tangle and fish bones. At Melsetter, in Hoy, they have this year formed a regular rookery in the plantations.

Lapwings nest in the parish of Tingwall, but during my stay at Whalsay, I saw these birds only once. This was in the month of February, when I happened to be living a few days in the Out-Skerries. There I saw a flock of them which had probably been driven out of their course by a gale of wind. I also saw a single swallow one fine evening in July. It must have come a considerable distance from its usual habitat in summer, either from Norway or the North of Scotland. It was skimming along vigorously in its usual way, and reminded me of summer farther south. I suppose that the insular position of the country rather than the high latitude of 60° prevents the swallow from breeding here. For in Norway, they are to be met with in a higher latitude.

The temperature also is rather low. During my sojourn, I never felt what I considered one really hot day. In summer there were two or three days which one might

call warm, and people at work were going about without coat or vest and complaining of the great heat, but I did not feel it at all oppressive. The sun rarely shines in an unclouded sky. In summer there are often fogs. Sometimes these are thin like a haze, at other times so dense as to wet the ground. Then there is always the cool sea breeze. In this way the summer heat is modified, and is never so great as where for days, it may be, the air is still and the sun shines with brilliancy in a clear sky. However, if the heat is not great in summer, the cold is not extreme in winter. The winds blowing across the Atlantic from the south-west come laden with moisture, so that the temperature is more frequently above the freezing point than below it.

Speaking of birds leads me to say that an admirable collection of preserved specimens of different kinds existed in the local museum at Lerwick. These were presented chiefly by Mr. Gatherer of H.M. Customs ; but from the neglect exhibited towards this institution I do not know if these are still in existence. I should be glad to learn that more space in a building easily accessible, has been given to a large quantity of rare and valuable objects of interest which at the time of my visit seemed to be very little cared for, and some of which were fast hastening to decay. For an extended account of the ornithology of the country I would refer to Dr. Saxby's *Birds of Shetland.*

The quadrupeds indigenous to the country are few in number. Hares are to be found in some districts, such as Voe in Delting, and some places in Tingwall. But these were introduced from the mainland not many years ago, nd do not seem to be on the increase ; but rabbits make

up in numbers at least for the scarcity of hares. There are no moles any more than there are in Orkney. Rats are found in few places of the country except in Lerwick, where, as in most seaports, they are abundant enough. In Whalsay they had been at one time so numerous as to be a plague. An inhabitant, in describing their numbers and voracity, told me that they gnawed clothes at night and nibbled at people's feet, that they had to hang up meal and other food in bags by bits of rope tied to the rafters, and that they were so numerous that the dogs were afraid of them. I suppose that the dogs had not been trained to keep down the vermin, and were not of the same breed as the celebrated terrier Billy, who was able to dispose of his hundred in a few minutes. But when people were in despair relief came from an unexpected quarter. And in this way. About this time the mansion-house of Symbister was building, and a number of workmen were employed at it who came from the south. Of these, some Scotch masons becoming acquainted with the disagreeable state of affairs, caught some weasels on the mainland and set them loose in Whalsay. Before the weasels the rats disappeared with the exception of a solitary individual who, for a number of years, maintained his ground in the shop at Symbister, and there, too wary for cat or trap, continued to feast on the fat of the land. Mice, however, exist in great numbers. They abound in dwelling-houses, and in out-houses and corn-stacks, especially during the winter. Whether it is that they assemble during the wet season in such places as are dry and afford them plenty of food, or that they increase faster at this season than any other, they seem to be especially abundant in winter. I once

placed a few sheaves of corn in the roof of the barn thinking they would be out of the way of harm, but on looking at the place in a few days I found the sheaves swarming with mice. As the sheaves were on two pieces of wood fixed to the couples and close to the top of the roof, the mice must have crawled up and clung to the wood just as flies cling to the ceiling.

The ponies for which Shetland is famous are supposed to have been brought from Norway. As is well known, they are of various colours. Jet black is the colour most esteemed. Little attention was, until a short time ago, paid to the selection of animals for breeding. Mares were kept for this purpose alone, and not for work or riding on; and as the best animals were sold for exportation, there was nothing to prevent the breed from deteriorating, except the occurrence of a severe winter, which killed off the weakest. As a good deal of the scattald has been divided among the different proprietors, and large portions fenced off for sheep-runs, the number of ponies must have greatly diminished. Some attention, however, is now paid to the selection of the best animals for breeding. It would be well if prizes were given in different parishes for the best animals exhibited at local shows, and that the breed would be kept pure without crossing with larger animals. Crossing with a mustang is said to have given rise to the Fetlar breed of ponies. These are very swift and high-spirited, but difficult to train, and on the whole the experiment can hardly be deemed a success.

A number of native sheep are still kept. These are of all shades and mixtures of white, black and brown. They are very hardy, and receive no food summer or winter,

beyond what they pick up on the common. In some places they have learned to eat sea weed, and seem to know when it is to be reached, as they come down from the hill pasture at the ebb of tide. From their living in a wild state, they are remarkably fleet and active in their movements, taking a stone or turf dyke if not too high like a roe deer. Some of them which have once acquired the habit of leaping dykes cannot be confined within an ordinary fence. Wherever there is an inequality in a wall of turf or stone to afford the least footing, they will rush at it though five feet high and clear it with the greatest ease. Such are called eilmark sheep, and are often placed on small islands to be fed there, where the water round them is a sufficient restraint. It is necessary that, as the pasture is common, every sheep on it should bear the mark of the owner. This consists of slits or holes in one or other of the ears, and serves to show to whom the animal belongs. This is called the lugmark. From time to time the owners of the sheep in a district meet on an appointed day, and with dogs drive the sheep into an enclosure. This is done that they be examined to see if they are free from scab, foot rot or any other disease. It is also done at the time of sheepshearing ; but instead of cutting the wool it is plucked off. I suppose this is an old habit, handed down from the times when cutting instruments, such as sheep shears, were not so common or easily procured as they are now. As the wool is ready to come away, and is separated from the sheep with great care, the operation is not attended with pain. The sheep are also vigilantly watched during the lambing season, as this is the time when, ewes and lambs being helpless, are apt to be attacked by the ravens.

Sheep-farming was quite the rage in Shetland some ten or twelve years ago. Large sums of money were expended in fencing and draining the pasture-land, and while the price of wool and mutton was high this mode of husbandry was profitable in most cases. Flocks of Cheviot or black-faced ewes were kept and crossed with Leicester tups, and the lambs were sold in the end of the season before winter. But I should be inclined to think that owing to the humidity of the climate sheep would be reared at a disadvantage compared with farming in a drier climate and on a drier soil than what the greatest part of Shetland consists of. But this is a matter on which only those actually engaged in the business are competent to be regarded as authorities. Apart, however, from the commercial and economic aspect of the question, it is always a melancholy sight to look on deserted glens and homesteads in ruins; for it is only in those places which were formerly cultivated that the pasture is rich enough for sheep to thrive on. And there, on the soil rendered fertile by the labour of successive generations, the grass continues to grow during almost every month of the year. In early spring the grass is of a bright green, and forms quite a contrast to the bleak and brown wilderness around.

The breed of cattle common to this country is as well known as the ponies are. A long-continued course of scanty food has reduced their size, so that a cow when fat does not weigh more than three, or very rarely four cwt. But it is not to be wondered at that cattle become stinted in their growth and of small size when subjected, especially in winter, to a course of semi-starvation. Straw and hay are very scarce, and turnips are scarcely reared by the

small crofters. In winter every day that the weather permits the cattle are driven out to the hillside; and when the pasture has not been eaten too bare in summer they are able to get as much coarse grass as ekes out their scanty subsistence. But where the country has been overstocked, as is generally the case, the cattle are so emaciated in spring that some die before the grass grows up, and others are so lean and weak that when they lie down they have to be assisted in rising to their feet. The cows give a large quantity of rich and excellent milk in proportion to their size. They are attended to with great care. It is interesting to observe that the dairy utensils and mode of churning is the same as that which still exists in Norway. The milking pails or cogs are identical in shape with those which the Laplanders employ in milking their reindeer. There is a considerable demand for Shetland cows in the south, and if their excellent qualities as milkers, and the little expense with which they can be kept, were generally known, they would be still more sought after. Many families would keep one who have less than an acre of grass; straw and a small quantity of turnips in winter, with a bit of oil cake, would maintain them in excellent condition. Besides, when people have milk and cream furnished at home, without having to purchase it from shops or dairies, they can use it in greater quantities and with more relish; and if shape and colour were attended to in breeding, a Shetland cow, when in good condition, is by no means unseemly to look at. Their beef, even when the animals are killed when old, is of excellent quality. It is much more tender and delicate than the beef of animals seven or eight cwt. to the carcase, and which is generally loaded with lumps of fat, fit only for a Russian or Esquimaux.

CHAPTER XXI.

Antiquities, Broughs, Barrows, Celts—A disappointment—Storms—Boating in winter—Blown off the coast to the Dogger Bank—Gale of 1832—Buckie boat in a gale.

To one with an antiquarian turn of mind Shetland still presents an extensive field of investigation. In no part of the British islands does such a number of brochs remain. Nearly all these are in ruins. Few of them have been thoroughly explored. Barrows also abound, which present an equally interesting subject for discussion and exploration. There are also stone circles and Picts houses in various places. I was shown in one of the Out-skerries the ruins of a dwelling which had been a leper house. Few could have found shelter in it, as the size was limited. It is sad to reflect on what must have been the miserable condition of these unhappy men, secluded from the rest of the human family, with few of the comforts of life, and in such dreary spots as they were confined to. From want of cleanliness and unwholesome diet, leprosy seems to have been formerly very common in Shetland, and several places are pointed out as having been the places of banishment of lepers.

Of ancient warlike implements, rough and polished celts are most common. Some beautifully polished stone hatchets have been found. So far as I am aware, no flint

arrow heads have been met with. The scarcity of wood to form the shafts would account for this. Rudely shaped stones like wedges, from nine to eighteen inches in length, have been found in great abundance in several places. What these have been used for remains a puzzle to antiquarians. Some will have it that they were used for digging, others that they were employed for what are called tethersticks, where wood is common, and others again that they were used for fastening the ends of the straw ropes which secured the thatch of houses.

Stone mortars and pestles for taking the husk off bear may also be met with. In my ignorance, as I saw one or two of these where there were ruins, I thought that they were old fonts, but more learned and skilful antiquarians than I fall into mistakes. Living in Aberdeenshire, I was once completely taken in by an account which I heard of something very ancient and wonderful which had been found in a neighbouring parish to my own. In the Ordnance Survey I had seen notices mentioning that celts, arrowheads and coins, had been found in some farms in the next parish. Making inquiries on the subject there one day at one of these places, I was told that such things had been found, but that this had taken place when a former tenant was there. "But," said the man to whom I was speaking, and to whom I was a stranger, "If you are in that line I can tell you of something that will interest you." He then went on to say, that at a place which he mentioned, some five or six miles distant, a great curiosity had been lately found. He described it as of horn very ancient, and with Latin letters on it. He added that the finder intended to present it to the Banff Museum. Afraid that any one might anticipate me, and

anxious if possible to secure the relic to add it to my own collection, I set out next day to the place. Finding the house, I made cautious inquiry regarding the interesting object which had been discovered. I was told that it was quite true that such a thing as I mentioned had been found. It was produced, and I proceeded to examine it. It was in shape and size like a saucer or small plate, and with something like letters on it. On deciphering these I found that they revealed the substance and age of the relic, being "Gutta Percha Co., Limited."

In the Lerwick Museum some very finely polished stone axes are to be seen. They are chiefly of agate. Very few bronze weapons have been met with. One was lately found in Lunnasting. It was a beautifully formed spear-head of large size. A travelling hawker saw some children playing with it, and knowing that something might be made of it, got it into his possession for a few shillings. He sold it to a well-known antiquarian in Kirkwall, Mr. Cursiter, in whose possession it still remains. Digging among some ruins in Isbister, part of a small bell was found, composed of bronze. It was possibly used in pre-reformation times in the church service. The place where it was found appears to have been the ruins of a chapel.

The gales of wind in winter and spring blow with terrific violence. Their direction is from E. veering to W. They generally last two or three days, but often longer. One in particular I shall never forget. It came from the S.E. The wind was so strong that the tops of the waves were flattened by it, and thus did not seem of an unusual height. But their force was very great, and as the sea came in above the highest flood mark, it rolled

over out of their usual resting places stones as big as a common dining-table and several tons in weight. The water was of a greenish colour, as if violently churned, and the foam and spray were carried a considerable distance inland. Looking from a window it was a grand sight to see, at about two miles distant, successive seas strike the base of a precipice a hundred feet high, and then rising high in air, be carried in part over the summit. Such storms came on quite suddenly. The morning might be calm and mild, and before it was dark a tempest might be raging. I had a slight experience of the changeable nature of the weather on one occasion when going to Lerwick. The distance by land after crossing the Sound, an undertaking in itself, was about thirty miles. By sea it was fifteen. On a fine day, with wind and tide favourable, it was a delightful sail, so many objects of interest in headlands, inlets, and islands, were passed in succession.

Having some business in Lerwick, and having accidentally learned that a boat was going next day, I desired the owner to call for me on his way. This he did about seven in the morning. But I found that he was going in a small boat accompanied only by his son, a stout lad of about fifteen. However, I agreed to go. The morning was dull and almost calm. So the man and his son took the oars and I steered. We thought that the wind when it rose would be in our favour. It did rise and blew pretty stiff, but it was against us. There was nothing for it but perseverance at the oars, as the wind was so contrary that beating could not be attempted. The sea grew rough, but we did not ship much water, but the spray from time to time made my position rather uncomfortable. I was of no use at the oar, as though I

might have managed to pull for a quarter of an hour I could not have done much more. However, notwithstanding this state of matters we persevered, hoping to get under the lee of Bressay. But when it came to be two in the afternoon, and we had got no further than the Mull of Eswick I gave in, and said that I wished to get on shore. In these circumstances, the sail was hoisted, and we made for an inlet where there was easy landing. But as we came past an island with high precipitous sides, a flann took the sail aback and we were like to be capsized. However, we escaped the danger and got ashore. I was so stiff and benumbed with sitting about six hours in the cramped place I had in the stern of the boat, that I could hardly walk up to a house which was near the shore. We were kindly received, and after getting warmed, we left the boat drawn up and set out for Lerwick by land. The distance was about ten miles. As we went along a snow storm came on, and after walking about half the distance I resolved to give up the idea of going to Lerwick. I parted with my companions, who went on to Lerwick, and betook myself to the hospitable manse of Tingwall. There I spent the night, and went to Lerwick next day. It still continued to blow a gale, but the wind went into the north, and as there was a heavy fall of snow which blocked up the roads, I could not get home by land or sea for a week. On the mainland all this change might occur unnoticed. A gentleman in Lerwick told me that he once had a somewhat similar experience in summer, but was driven to a greater distance from home. He had occasion to attend a sale of wood at Dunrossness. This is in the south end of the

island, and is about twenty-eight miles from Lerwick by land. He was going to perform the journey on horseback. But as he was going along the street just before setting out he met a shipmaster of his acquaintance. Stopping to exchange a few words he told him where he was going. The shipmaster said that his schooner was going round to the west side, that he would leave in half an hour, and that if he would come with him he would put him ashore in a boat at the very place to which he was going. My friend, seeing the day was fine and the wind fair, agreed at once to go, thinking it a much easier way of journeying than riding on a pony. He got aboard and there was a delightful run for about half of the way. But then it began to blow, and by the time the schooner was opposite Sumburgh Head the wind was so high and the sea coming round the point so strong that it would have been madness to attempt to launch a boat. So they tried to stand off and on hoping the wind would moderate, but the wind increased to a gale, and the gale to a hurricane, so that the vessel was hove to. For three days and nights the ship was kept head to wind in this way, and they drifted until the gale spent itself. By this time they judged that they were near the Dogger Bank. The weather having at length moderated, sail was made, and the first land they saw was Duncansbay Head. Thence they made their way to Shetland and my friend reached home after a week's absence, having had no luggage with him except a greatcoat and an umbrella.

The wonderful preservation of Elizabeth Mouatt who, alone in a small sloop, was driven off the coast to Norway, must be fresh in the recollection of every one.

She was going to Lerwick from the south end of the island, and instead of going the long and toilsome journey of nearly thirty miles by land, embraced the easier and more comfortable mode of travelling presented by the *Columbine*. The result happened to be that the sloop was blown off the coast. But instead of foundering, as every one expected, or being dashed to pieces on the rock-bound coast of Norway, the little bark, as if guided by a skilful steersman who intimately knew every fiord and inlet, was safely beached on a small island on a rock-bound coast.

It is sad to think how many hardy seamen every year meet a watery grave in prosecuting their dangerous calling on the deep sea, or even when a sudden squall comes on close beside the shore. Many contract illness which affects them all their lives, from having to row for hours from the haaf against a head wind in a tempestuous sea. A boat's crew has been known to row for many hours without intermission. On reaching the shore after escaping the fury of the sea, it has been no uncommon thing for one of their number to drop down dead from exhaustion, while others have been permanently injured.

The gale of 1832 was one of the most disastrous that ever occurred in Shetland. It took place at a season of the year when the weather is generally fine, in July during the haaf fishing. All the boats from the east side had gone to sea, when, without any previous warning, it came suddenly on. The wind blew from the N.W. a perfect hurricane, with heavy showers of hail. Many boats were lost. Several crews were saved by Dutch busses which weathered the gale. Others got to shore at different parts of the coast. Two were driven

before the wind to Norway, and there providentially reached the land by means of those inlets which abound there. They were hospitably entertained during the winter. I was told that on the land the force of the wind was so great that in many places it blew over the turf dykes, and the sky was of a lurid redness. One boat's crew had a remarkable experience, having been saved and carried to America by a passing ship. One of the survivors, Alexander Anderson, living in Marrister in 1876, gave me the account of their rescue. Talking of the event, he said that it had come on quite suddenly and unexpectedly. Barometers were not common in those days. So heavy were the showers of hail, that owing to this and the quantity of water they shipped in their open boat, it was all they could do by baling to keep themselves from sinking. I said, "I suppose you had nothing but the mast up." "Oh sir," said he, "We were fain to take down the mast." As they were struggling the best way they could trying to keep the boat's head to wind, a large vessel was seen bearing down upon them. On coming near them the vessel was put in stays, and a rope was thrown over the side for them to climb up by. One by one they scrambled up on deck. All were saved except one, the last, who, benumbed with cold, lost his hold and falling into the sea was drowned. Before the gale abated the vessel was so far from land that the captain held on his course for Philadelphia. In due time they reached this port, having been kindly enough treated on board, but got nothing except food for working. On landing at Philadelphia they made known their case to the British Consul, in order that he might assist them in getting a passage home. They had no money

and only the clothes in which they had set out to the fishing. Very uncouth they must have looked in the Quaker City. The Consul at once interested himself in their behalf; but as there was not so much intercourse then between Great Britain and the States as now, a considerable time elapsed before a free passage could be procured for them. However, for several months they got work, which enabled them to live without being dependent on charity. In due course, after being absent about six months, they reached home; and as no word of them had been heard, they were received as if they had risen from the dead. When I was visiting a hamlet one day, the mistress of a house at which I called made some inquiries about the people who lived near the manse. I asked her if she knew the district. "Well do I know it," she said, "and the Setter Hill beside. I was brought up there; my father, my two uncles, and other friends were lost in the great storm in 1832, and when one boat after another came home I and the other children of the place used to go day after day to the top of the Setter Hill, and watch to see if our boat would come back. After sitting there for hours, and when we had cried till we could not cry more, we had to go home when it grew dark. But the boat never came back, and we had to stop gaen to the hill; but though its mair than forty years since syne I have never forgotten the sorrow and distress."

The boats used in fishing at a distance from the land are now of much larger size than the sixerns in former use. Many of them are completely decked, and have sleeping accommodation protected from the weather. Yet in stormy weather the hardy fishermen are sometimes exposed to great hardship and privation. As an example,

I quote from the *Banffshire Journal* the experience of a Buckie boat, going in the spring of 1881 to the white-fishing at Lerwick. The *Bella Sinclair*, skipper James Reid, "Rosie" Nether Buckie, sailed for Lerwick on the 3rd March. The boat carried a crew of six, and had also a young woman aboard, taken for the purpose of attending to the cooking during their residence in Shetland. For safety the boat took shelter in lee of Fair Isle. She remained there hove to all Thursday night. On Friday morning she was driven out to sea, when the shinboards gave way, allowing the foremast to fall aft, and she thereafter lay helplessly in the trough of the sea. In order to keep her head to the wind, two sails were thrown overboard with ropes attached, as well as some spare spars and tarpaulin with warps and chain, which served as flying anchors. With a piece of the small jib on the jigger mast the boat lay to all Friday, shipping some water. The same night the warp attached to one of the sails thrown overboard gave way, and she again reverted to her former dangerous position. The spirits of the crew began to sink at their perilous position. They were in the open Atlantic contending with a raging sea, surpassing in violence all that they had previously been accustomed to, and there was no appearance of the gale abating. They, however, got out the fore-haulyards which they attached to the big jib, a chaff bed, and basket, and threw them overboard which had the effect of steadying her. On Saturday forenoon the fore-haulyards gave way, and she was again placed in her former dangerous position for a time. Another chaff bed, a basket with stones and kedge were thrown overboard, and with this her head was brought up. In the afternoon the rope attached to the

chaff bed gave way, but by accident the kedge became entangled with the spars and proved of great service, the spars being found to be the most effective "streamer" of all. During all Saturday it blew a hurricane intensifying towards night, and it was found still necessary to tie the nets in two bundles and throw them overboard with ropes attached. During the night the boat lost her rudder. On Sunday the hurricane still continued, and the hardships of the crew were increased by a heavy snow-drift which set in and continued all day. By the forenoon of that day all the "streamers" had given way except the spars with chain attached. The crew at this time lost all hopes of safety and looked for instant death. As a last resource they got the bowsprit turned and set it up for a foremast, put on a spare rudder and let go the chain and spars attached. They set a small piece of spare sail and kept the boat's head east by south. She lay hove-to in this way until Monday morning when the wind moderated. By this time she had drifted upwards of sixty miles north of Shetland. On Tuesday morning they spoke a Norwegian vessel and got some water. During the greater part of the time the storm lasted the pump was kept going every two hours, and the crew were much exhausted with anxiety, fatigue, and want of sleep. About five o'clock on Tuesday afternoon they sighted Hoy Head, the highest point of Orkney, and Scrabster was reached at ten o'clock at night. After taking in a supply of water the boat set sail for Buckie which they reached on Thursday. During the continuance of the storm the young woman who was aboard remained in the forecastle and all the time behaved admirably.

The foregoing graphic account, while highly creditable

to the courage and seamanship of the far-famed Buckie fishermen, shows the imminent peril in which they were placed.

CHAPTER XXII.

Damp climate - Expense of maintaining churches and manses—Embarrassed properties—Difficulties of housekeeping—Sour fish—Skios—Character of people—Pilfering—Malice.

In housekeeping the great difficulty is to guard against the effects of the damp climate. In the first place, in building a house it is no easy matter to keep out the wet. When a gale of wind blows accompanied with long continued rain, the water oozes through the joinings of the best constructed windows, and even comes in at the sides of the window panes if the putty is old and hard. It also finds its way in at the chimney heads where the slates are next the gables, unless the slates have been deeply bedded in the gables and fixed with Portland cement. It is also necessary, unless the walls are very thick, to have them harled not in the ordinary way, but first to have a coating of Portland cement over the rubble work, and then to put a coating of harl over this. Hence it may be understood that houses rapidly deteriorate under the influence of wind and weather, and that the mason has to be frequently employed, on the principle that a stitch in time saves nine. Churches and manses are thus a much heavier burden on heritors than in the south. The rental of parishes is comparatively smaller, and proprietors are apt to grumble at the heavy taxation

which they are sometimes called on to meet. Still there is no part of the world where land is held more tenaciously, or where the design of acquiring it is stronger than in Shetland. Properties are held in it which barely float, the rental very little exceeding the outlay, and yet the idea of parting with them would be spurned by the little better than nominal possessors of them. Not church or manse building has given rise to this condition of things. The causes of embarrassment have been similar to those which have occurred elsewhere. Mansion building, extravagant living, absenteeism, and other things which need not be specified, have contributed to the difficulties under which many proprietors labour. On the other hand, several proprietors could be mentioned, who, by continued thrift in successive generations, and by living chiefly at home among their own people, have the reputation of living not only in ease but in affluence.

So much in opposition to what has sometimes been urged against parish ministers as contributing to the poverty of landlords. As regards the incidence of taxation on feuars, this is an anomaly which should be got rid of. But supposing the water is excluded from coming in at windows, walls, or gables, there is an almost constant enemy to guard against in the damp. This, except when a frosty wind prevails from the north or north-west, is persistent and continuous. The result of this is seen in the effects produced. Articles of cutlery, such as knives and forks, when laid aside, are soon covered with rust. Grates and stoves have to be constantly black-leaded, as unless the black lead is renewed the rust appears beneath it. Clothes in wardrobes or hung up in closets, grow mouldy if not frequently aired. Flesh meat soon becomes

tainted. Even tea becomes decayed and useless if stowed away for what we would be apt to think a short time. My friend, Mr. Peterson, whose name I have already mentioned, got an unexpected present of tea from a visitor to the Skerries. As it was not needed at the time, it was laid aside until the supply which he already had in the house was exhausted. When this took place, and recourse was had to the gift which was lying in store, it was found to be like the Gibeonites' bread, white and mouldy.

But the difficulty of preserving provisions, such as meat, fish, and butter, is nothing at the present day compared with what it must have been when salt was scarce or not to be got at all. And this accounts for the depraved taste which prevails for fish in a state almost verging on putrefaction, or for the sour whey called bland, which in acidity may challenge a comparison with vinegar.

The taste for sour fish—which, however, is nothing worse than that of the gourmand for food with a "gamey" flavour—is accounted for in this way. When there was no salt to be got, a stone house with openings in the sides to let the air pass freely through was built on an eminence. This was called a skio. Inside of this fish were hung up to dry which had not been salted. As the temperature never rises high, and as there is an almost constant motion of the air, and no danger of flies to breed maggots, the fish gradually grows hard and dry, and is called, when preserved in this way, stock fish. The skio is from time to time examined, and any fish which had given way to the process of decay, which sometimes took place, and which had consequently fallen down, were picked up and eaten. Hence the taste. I have heard that in Caithness, sixty or seventy years ago, the same

taste prevailed. The young of the sea gulls were laid aside for a few days before being cooked and eaten. And if a very savoury mess was desired, a large cod was wrapped up in a cloth, without having been previously cleaned, and stuffed into a hole in the thatch of the house for a few days. Then after being cleaned and boiled it was partaken of with the greatest delight.

How different this from the care which is now taken not only to preserve food with salt, but to keep it fresh with ice or in hermetically sealed tins, by means of which it is brought from the most distant parts of the globe very little changed.

The facilities for sending fresh fish to the various towns in the south by steamers and railways, have vastly increased the value of some kinds of fish. Formerly halibut was of little value except for bait. It could not be salted or dried, and therefore large fish weighing half-a-cwt., instead of selling as now at sixpence or a shilling a pound, could be got for a shilling or eighteenpence. And halibut is sometimes got in large quantities. The enormous take of five tons has been landed from one boat as the result of a couple of days' absence at sea.

The conduct of the Shetlanders is in general very harmless and inoffensive. There is very little crime, as is seen by the few policemen in the islands. It is only in Lerwick, in the state of society which invariably exists in seaports, that offences against the law prevail to any great extent. Throughout the country no one thinks of locking or bolting their doors when going to bed. Yet it is by no means to be supposed that the country is an Eden, or the people free from faults. It is complained by masters that servants are often addicted to pilfering.

Articles of value are safe enough, but things of less importance are appropriated whenever there is an opportunity.

In the country, drawing sheaves of corn from the stacks of others, by those who are in want of straw, is an offence by no means uncommon. Some districts have a worse reputation for thieving than others. Great skill is shown in stealing of this sort, not unlike what we read of Indian professional thieves. Though the stacks may be close to the dwelling, and a dog be on the watch, sheaves will be drawn from a closely built stack, without any traces of the depredator being left.

Sheep also from time to time disappear from the small islands on which they have been left to graze ; and malice is sometimes exercised in injuring the cattle of those against whom ill will is entertained. As in Ireland, instances are not unknown of cattle being maimed or destroyed. In Whalsay, from the number of inhabitants, and the pasture having been curtailed by the enclosing of a sheep farm, thereby cutting off a large portion from the common, only about a dozen ponies were kept. These were not used for any work but simply for breeding. They were generally kept in shares, different individuals being part possessors, so that when a sale was to be effected the consent of the joint owners had to be obtained. This contributed to the security of the animals, as a larger number was interested in their preservation than if they had belonged to one person. But envy on the part of some at the profit made by keeping these ponies, and the idea that too much of the pasture was eaten by them, led occasionally to the destruction of one or other of these interesting animals. The young

men in the moonlight were in the habit of getting hold of them, and in turn riding races with them over the rough ground, thereby seriously injuring them. They have even been accused in one or two instances of driving ponies over the cliffs. But such cases, it must be admitted, are by no means common.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Quarrels about sea ware—Fight at Isbister—Reference to Kirk-Session—Curiosity of people—Taste for reading—Rising in the world—Heavy rates.

QUARRELS between families were not unfrequent. These seldom ended in violence. The parties at variance were very guarded in their conduct, and restrained their animosities to such mutual accusations and recriminations as find currency in gossip and tale-bearing. Sometimes a difference of interest sets one hamlet against another, and the invasion of fancied rights stirs the old Norse blood to more than mere strife of words. Traditions are handed down of bloody skirmishes between the people of adjoining districts arising out of the alleged infringement of rights of pasturage by one side or another. I was once called on to act as a judge in a quarrel that had taken place between the people of two hamlets, regarding the right to sea ware. This was a matter of some consequence, as from the sea-ware kelp was made. The making of kelp, though it is of less value than formerly, is still carried on in Whalsay. At one time it sold as high at thirty pounds a ton, but has fallen as low as four pounds. The sea-weed is cut from the rocks, or collected when cast on the shore by the waves. It is then spread on the ground to dry, and turned from time to time until it is ready to be

burned. A trench is then formed in the ground, and a fire made in it with a few peats. To this there is added by degrees the dried sea-weed, until a fiercely blazing mass fills the trench. This is stirred with something like an iron rake or hook, just as molten iron from the furnace used to be puddled. When the dried sea-weed is all burned, and the fire exhausts itself, a dark-looking solid mass, like coarse salt is left, which is kelp or soda. This is sold to the shop and stored till exported. Iodine and bromine, as is well known, are two of the products obtained from kelp, which give it a sufficiently marketable value to keep up its manufacture, which, until lately, from the low price, was threatened with extinction.

The amount of kelp produced depends on the quantity of sea weed to be obtained. As the area on which this grows is limited, it is a matter of great importance to secure it when it is washed on shore in large quantities. At the time I speak of, at a place called Isbister, a large quantity came ashore. The boundary between different families was not clearly defined, some having claims which extended beyond the line which separated their crofts from their neighbours. In ordinary circumstances this unsettled state of things was of little importance ; but when, as happened at this time, the seaware was cast ashore on the disputed territory in such abundance as to be of considerable value, the dispute arose to such a height as to end in a regular melee. In spite of remonstrance some were carrying off ware from forbidden ground. As words seemed to have no influence, a woman, the wife of one of the crofters, took hold of a lad who was going off with a creelful of ware, "coupit the creel," and pitched the bearer on the top of it. His friends ran to the rescue, and

then the other side were not slow to come to the woman's assistance, until all the forces on each side came into action. Then followed a mutual pummelling of each other among the men, and scratching, tearing of hair and rending of garments among the women. When both sides were thoroughly exhausted, the battle ceased, and the contending parties drew off to dress their wounds and scratches, and look to the state of their tattered garments. No bones were broken, nor were grievous wounds inflicted; and as they were not in the habit of carrying sea-ware arrayed in holiday attire, the damage to clothes was trifling. One of the elders, however, represented to me that he had been requested to lay the matter before the Kirk-Session, so that the persons in fault might be reprimanded, and such quarrels prevented in future. So a meeting of the Kirk-Session was held, to which all parties interested or concerned in the dispute were called. All attended, and after both sides were heard, the deliverance of the court was given. As may be supposed, it satisfied only one side. The principal spokesman on the other side, on the judgment being pronounced, expressed very respectfully his dissent, saying that he was not satisfied. Whereupon the matter ended.

This, however, was a dispute which should never have arisen. It was the duty of the proprietor to have made proper regulations, so that tenants should not have differences of this sort; but the relations between landlord and tenant were somewhat complicated. The proprietor let the crofts to the fishermen on condition that they fished for a company. This company had a shop, the only shop in the island. They also bought the kelp when it was made. The company were also factors as well as

middlemen, or at least one of the firm was. If they got the kelp they did not ask when it was made or how procured. Instead of strictly defining the tenants' rights, the proprietor left them very much in this case to themselves. It was something like the state of things which was said to prevail on a northern railway. There, ten or a dozen burly fellows were allowed to crowd into a compartment rather small for them, and the guard, on being appealed to for order, shut the door and said they could "settle it amo' themsels."

My experience in this case led me to decline interfering in another complaint which was brought before me. This was an accusation of alleged sheep-stealing. On some small islets left in the hands of crofters, sheep graze all the year round. On one of these, along with some other sheep, was a black ram, the property of the ground officer, Andrew Barclay. This sheep disappeared, and Andrew came to me and accused certain individuals whom he named of having been guilty of the theft. I pointed out to him that the proper course for him to adopt was to report the case to the criminal authorities at Lerwick. In a population of twelve hundred we had no policeman. My recommendation was declined, and it was insisted that it was the duty of the Kirk-Session to take up the affair and make investigation into it. I did not feel it prudent to interfere, and there the matter ended; but the thieves who stole the black sheep were not brought to justice. I am not sure that I was right in declining to make inquiries, but I had been accustomed to see courts of justice deal with such matters. I am sorry to say that the aggrieved owner of the ram which had disappeared was so angry and displeased with the refusal he met with that he ceased

attending church. I remonstrated with him, but to no purpose. The session, as he conceived, had not done their duty, and he took his revenge by staying away from church.

The enclosure of the scattalds, which in many cases has followed their division among neighbouring proprietors, has excited a great amount of ill-feeling and discontent among the crofters. Their stock of sheep and ponies has in this way been very much diminished. Formerly the scattald was free to every one who had a house, and the amount of stock which he might place on it was only limited by his means and inclination. Doubtless, in a national point of view, the division and enclosure of commons is a benefit. In this way only can the improvement of waste lands be made, and profitable sheep-farming carried on. To individuals, however, loss is caused by their being shut out from a privilege which they formerly enjoyed. In Whalsay, a sheep farm has been carved out of a portion of the island. This embraced a large portion of the scattald. As the pasture ground was formerly limited enough, this proceeding was viewed with great disfavour. From time to time the fence was broken down, to the great annoyance of the tenant. Sometimes pieces of the wire were taken away and used for various purposes. One of these showed a little ingenuity. The houses are thatched with straw. This is fastened and kept down with straw ropes. These are rather brittle, and liable to give way at times. To remedy this, stolen pieces of fencing wire were covered with twisted straw, and used instead of straw ropes, which they resembled. But as the people of Whalsay are a law-abiding people, and very much attached to the family who possess the property,

and as the sheep farmer himself is exceedingly popular as a tenant and neighbour, there is now little to complain of as regards this conduct in the way of malice or injury. In their intercourse with each other they are very kindly and agreeable, and in addressing strangers they are extremely courteous and polite. If there is a gate across the road they will hasten to open it for you.

I do not know if the habit still prevails, but strangers were frequently applied to for alms, even by those who were not professional beggars or even in want. In olden times the inquiries usually addressed to a stranger at first sight were, "Where do you come from?" and then, curiosity on this head being gratified, the next question was, "What is the price of the boll of meal at Leith?" Other questions, if an opportunity is afforded follow, and if evasive answers are given, they are put in a direct and pointed form. All this seems merely the natural outcome of the mind for knowledge and information. In gratifying this desire, they do not seem conscious of displaying either rudeness or inquisitiveness.

They have been described as deceitful and cunning. In extenuation of this we have been asked to look at the condition in which they lived until quite recently. How, we are asked, in the state of abject dependence in which they lived, and in being quite at the mercy of the landlords, could we expect frankness and openness of character? Deceit and cunning were only the natural defence against violence, oppression and injustice. But when they have no end to gain, or object in view, they can readily adopt a different tone, and are quite as independent in speech and manners as any people can be.

Notwithstanding their faults, like the ancestors from

whom they are descended, the Shetlanders may be called a superior and intellectual race. This may not show itself, as it has done in the Icelanders and Faroese for centuries. They may not cultivate the Latin language, and amuse themselves during the long winter nights in playing chess. Their history and circumstances have been very different from those of the Norse in their seclusion in Iceland and the Faroes. But I have much pleasure in saying that nowhere have I found greater attention paid to the godly upbringing of the young at home, or greater aptitude for receiving instruction than in Shetland. In districts where there was no school or where schools were accessible for only part of the year, or perhaps were vacant as often as supplied with a teacher, I rarely found a child who had reached seven years of age but could read the scriptures with fluency. Among those who were grown up there was a great desire for reading. It might be rather called a craving. Newspapers, however old, and books of all kinds, were devoured with the greatest eagerness.

The only way which they had of rising in the world was by going to sea as sailors or emigrating to the colonies. A great many went to sea. First it might be a summer voyage to Greenland, with sealing or whaling vessels. The next step would be to ship at Leith, Liverpool, or any of our seaports, for a foreign voyage. On board a large vessel a young lad found some of his countrymen who were ready to show him kindness. When at leisure they helped him in reading, writing, and in arithmetic, so that he did not forget what he had already learned. Then when he had sailed on two or three voyages, and saved a little money, he went during a winter or for a longer

period to a school where navigation was taught, and then passed his examination for mate, and in the course of time for master. He was now at the head of his profession, and during the best part of his life sailed as a shipmaster to all quarters of the globe. When old age came on, and he was no longer able to endure the strain and fatigue of mind and body that accompany the responsibility of navigating a vessel, he usually settled in a seaport and there spent the remainder of his days. His savings were generally invested in shipping, and in this way he often accummulated a good deal of money. The position to which he thus arrived gave his family a good start in the world, and a better chance of rising in it than he himself had at first enjoyed. Seeing that there are now greater facilities for receiving instruction in the ordinary branches of education in the remotest parts of the country than formerly, and that a natural love for learning and quickness in receiving it exist, it may be expected that Shetlanders will not fail to take advantage of those openings which may improve their condition in society.

Though careful and saving in their habits, they show themselves liberal and generous enough when they consider it necessary. Not to speak of the many kindly acts done for myself and family, I will mention one instance. The young man who, as I have already mentioned, came from China to see his relatives, stayed all winter. He attended church very regularly, and was more liberal in his contributions to church purposes than others could afford to be. Hearing that he was about to leave for China again, I asked him to spend an evening at the manse. He did so, and I found him very agreeable in his manners and well-

informed. Indeed, I received so much information from him, of what he had seen, and of the ways and doings of the Chinese, that I regretted not having made his acquaintance sooner. He left in a few days, and I did not see him again. To my surprise, however, on his arrival in London he sent me a letter saying that he had ordered a chest of the finest tea to be sent to my address, by the firm with which he was connected. In due course the chest of tea arrived, but I have never had an opportunity of thanking the donor.

As to the condition of the poor, if it were not for the help given to them in various ways by friends and neighbours, I do not see how they could support life on the allowance given to them from the rates. This often amounts to no more than two or three shillings a month; and yet, from the number of poor on the roll, the rates are very high. In some parishes it is as high as four shillings in the pound. The number of poor on the roll is exceptionally high, compared with parishes in Scotland, from several causes. Marriages take place when the parties are comparatively young. Thus help is withdrawn from parents by reason of the inability of those who have families themselves to contribute to the support of father or mother. Then frequent deaths by drowning occur. By these the support of aged parents is taken away, or widows and children are rendered destitute. Sons and daughters leave the islands and go abroad, or to service in the south. These for a time may send home some money, but this source of assistance often ceases. Unsuccessful fishings or bad crops bring some to poverty. Thus from one cause or another, owing to the number of poor, the

rates are excessively high, though the weekly sum given to each individual pauper seems a starvation allowance. It is complained that here, as in other places, relief from the poor rates is gradually destroying the feeling of independence which formerly prevailed, and that the parochial funds are supposed to be like money in the bank, on which cheques may be drawn to an unlimited amount.

The population of the islands is about 30,000. Emigration is constantly taking place. Numbers of young men leave as sailors. Many of these settle elsewhere and do not return. Females go south to take service. Some of these get married and also remain in the south. In this way the Shetlanders in Aberdeen, Dundee, Leith, Newcastle, and other towns, are more numerous than one would suppose. At other times whole families emigrate. The favourite destination hitherto has been New Zealand, but some go to Australia, others to the United States. Some years ago there were enforced clearances in several districts. There is a constant influx on a small scale into Lerwick of people from the country, who, not being able to keep their crofts, or having been put out of them, come to the town for shelter and employment. One sometimes wonders how, in ancient times, when there was little commerce, the supply of food raised in the country was equal to the wants of the population. The quantities of oatmeal and flour imported at present every week are apt to astonish one, and we wonder how the balance was maintained, when there was no emigration, between the natural increase of the people and the limited area capable of cultivation. But it has to be borne in mind that there was then little

or no exportation of fish, or of sheep, cattle, or swine. Though the boats were small, and the modes of fishing far inferior to those employed at the present day, the various kinds of fish were found in abundance nearer the land than now, and the fish caught, and the beef and mutton and pork produced, were consumed by those who reared them. Besides, though there was little or no emigration, diseases of various kinds, famine and pestilence, from time to time swept off large numbers. Smallpox was especially destructive.

As to the future of these interesting islands it is evident that the welfare and prosperity of the inhabitants must depend to a very great extent on the successful prosecution of the various fishings. With so many natural harbours formed by inlets of the sea, and the surrounding seas teeming with fish of excellent quality, the quantity caught may be expected to increase every year. It is the duty of the State, as it is also the interest of the landlords, to give the fishermen every encouragement.

In bringing my remarks to a close, I may say that it was with no small degree of regret that I left Whalsay. My parishioners were most respectful, kind and obliging. But the seclusion of island life, the fatigue and exposure connected with boating, and the want of means of education for a young family, led me to embrace the opening presented me of obtaining a parish in what, after all, was my native country.

Mr. Hamilton, Symbister, a worthy son of the late minister of Bressay, assisted us free of all expense, with his large boat in removing to Lerwick. A crowd of the neighbours, men, women and children, took leave of us on the shore with the liveliest marks of affection. Though

eleven years have passed since I left, scarcely a day passes that I do not think of the island, the people, and their circumstances, and wish that all good things may attend them.

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